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Danish fairy tales

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Danish Fairy Tales

The witch swooped down to the water's edge

Fr.

Danish Fairy Tales

FROM SVEND GRUNDTVIG

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Willy Faith

ONCE upon a time a poor couple lived far away in the country, where they had a little farm and a great many children. One day yet another child was born to them—a boy—but when the time came to have him baptized, they could not persuade anyone to be his godfather. All their friends made some excuse, for they were afraid lest the child might in time become a burden to them as his parents were so poor. Now it happened that on the very day when the parents were going to take the child to church, without having found a godfather for him, an old beggar-man came to their house, and asked them in the name of God for a small gift. They shared with him what they had, but he noticed that something was troubling them. When he had heard their difficulty he offered to act as the child's godfather. "You shall not regret it," he said, and in their trouble they accepted his offer and went with the child to church where the beggar-man acted as godfather.

But they had forgotten to tell him what the child's name was to be, and when the clergyman asked the beggar-man, he said: "Well, faith, I don't know!" The clergyman caught only the two words, "Well, faith," and baptized the boy in that name, writing in the church register, "Willy Faith." The parents were delighted with the name, and said that they could not have given him a better, and so he was called "Willy Faith." The poor couple took the old man home to

their little house where they entertained him as well as they could. Before he bade them farewell he pulled a little rusty key from his pocket and said to the father: "Take good care of this till the boy is fourteen, then his godfather's gift will arrive and you will see how nicely the key will fit it." He then thanked them for all their kindness and bade them good-bye; they never saw him again.

The boy grew up strong and healthy and turned out an honest, truth-loving lad, who never gave his parents any trouble or caused them any sorrow. But they did not take very good care of the key, and the boy used to play with it until one fine day he lost it. Many years passed and the boy had grown a big lad, when one day, as he was helping his father to cart dung, he found in the dung-heap an old rusty key. He showed it to his mother, who recognized it at once, and told the boy that it was the key he had got as a christening gift, and then she told him the whole story of the old beggar-man and what he had said. The boy put the key in his pocket and henceforth took great care of it.

On the day when Willy had completed his fourteenth year he got up very early and when he looked out of the window he saw right in front of the door a pretty little house that had not been there before, and the like of which neither he nor his parents had ever seen. It was made of wood beautifully carved from top to bottom, and indeed it was a real little palace compared with their poor hut. There were no windows in the house, and the only opening was a high door in the gable, but

that was locked. The boy and his parents stood there with open eyes and could not imagine what it meant and how the house had got there. But Willy said: "That is my christening gift." He took the rusty old key and tried it in the lock, and behold! it fitted splendidly! Willy went into the house, and there stood the most charming little grey horse, saddled and bridled, and on the wall hung a suit of beautiful new clothes. Willy put them on; they fitted, as if they had been made for him, and he mounted the horse and put his feet into the stirrups which were just the exact length, and when he sat in the saddle, he bade his father and mother farewell, for he felt that he must ride forth into the world and try his luck.

He rode away at full speed, and his horse could certainly gallop; it was just as if he were flying through the air. He had been riding thus for a good while, when the horse said to him: "If you are hungry just put your hand behind my right ear, and if you are thirsty, put it behind my left one." "What," said Faith, "can you speak, my good horse? That is fine indeed!" And it was fine to have one's necessary refreshment ready at hand. And now they went faster than ever over hill and dale, until they came through a wood where it was beautifully cool, and here the horse walked slowly to recover from that fast ride. All at once Faith saw lying on the ground something that shone brightly; it was a bird's feather shining like pure gold. "I must have that," said Faith, and was about to dismount. "Leave it alone," said the horse, "or else you will

regret it," and accordingly Willy did not pick it up but rode on. After a while he saw on the ground a second feather that shone even more brightly than the first, and Faith wanted to pick it up also, when the horse said as before: "Leave it alone, or you'll regret it." But when they had gone a little bit further there lay a third feather more beautiful than the other two, and Faith did not like to leave it behind, although the horse said: "If you heed my advice, you'll leave it where it is! If you pick it up you'll certainly regret it." But in spite of the warning, Faith jumped down and picked up the feather, and now that he had done so he felt he must pick up the two other feathers of the same kind that he had seen on his ride; he felt as though he must do it whether he wished to or not.

These were strange feathers; each of them shone like pure gold, but when you held them beside each other, they formed a strange picture: it was just like the face of the most beautiful woman in the world. Faith found it difficult to keep his eyes from them, and at last he hid them carefully in his pocket and rode, swift as the wind, until they came to a large castle. "You must enter here and take service," said the horse.

Faith dismounted and went to the master of the horse, and asked him whether he could get any work in the stables; he wanted no payment, but only fodder for his little grey horse, and so he was engaged as stable-boy. There was a lot for him to see and to learn, and he tended the king's horses carefully, but did not forget to look after his own horse too, and for a time matters

went well with him. Faith had his own little room by the stable, and in the evening when he had finished his day's work he went there, carefully covered up his windows and drew forth his three feathers. They shone as brightly as the sun, so that they lit up his room as if it were daylight, and right from the middle of the feathers shone forth a beautiful woman's face, that Faith could never tire of looking at. And he sat down, evening after evening, to draw the picture as well as he could. He never succeeded to his satisfaction but always began again, improving the picture each time. But it was strictly forbidden to have light in the stable buildings, and though Faith had covered up his windows some one had noticed that there was light in his little room. This was reported to the master of the horse who went down to the stables to see for himself. Yes, it was quite true, there was light in the stable-boy's room! But before the master of the horse had entered Faith had managed to hide the feathers, and no light could be found; but the picture that he had been drawing was still there, and the master took it away with him. Next morning he went to the king and complained about Faith. He told the king that in spite of his orders there had been light in the boy's room, and that it had not been possible to discover its source, and he also told him how the boy had been sitting there drawing pictures like the one that he had now in his hand, and which he showed to the king.

The king, desiring to know more about the matter, had Faith brought before him. "What picture is that?"

he asked. The boy answered that it was a picture he had drawn himself. "Have you any more like it:" asked the king. The boy told him, he had, and he was sent to fetch the others; there were about thirty of them, all representing the same face, but the one he had drawn last was the best. "From what have you copied them?" asked the king, "and how can you sit drawing in the dark, for you say, you have burnt no light in the stable?" Now Faith had to tell the whole story, very much against his will, and then he had to fetch the feathers and show them to the king. The king sat for a long time looking at the feathers and the face they represented, and then he asked: "Whose face is it?" Faith could not tell him, as he did not know it himself, but the king was not satisfied with this reply and said: "Oh, you know much more than you wish to confess, but as you will not tell me, I will tell you. It is the picture of the most beautiful princess in the world and I was to marry her when I was still young, but now I am old. She ought to have been mine by right of arms, for I had conquered her father's kingdom and killed him. But she has vanished, and nobody has since been able to find her; I have sent out many messengers to all parts of the world, but without result. I have never married any other woman, because I considered no other good enough for me, for as I have told you, she was the most beautiful maiden on earth. You must know where she is, since you have a picture of her, and you must get her for me or else your life will be forfeited."

"Whose face is it?"

Faith assured him that he did not know anything about her, but it was no good his telling the king that he had found the feathers on the high road. The king insisted that Faith must promise to bring the princess to him ; if he could not, he would be hanged on the spot. "I will try," said Faith, because he wished to gain time. Then he went down into the stable to his little grey horse, and began to tell him of his trouble, that he had to find a princess, of whom he did not know even if she existed at all. "Serves you right," said the horse, "that is for the first feather that you picked up. I told you at the time that you would regret it, but don't despair, as it happens I am able to help you." Then the horse told him that the princess who was represented by the picture was certainly alive, and was the most beautiful princess in the whole wide world, but that she was living in a castle far away at the end of the earth. She had been changed into a bird with shining feathers, and the three feathers Faith had found were from this bird. If he wanted to find her, and bring her to the king, he would have to go and ask him for a warship with a full crew, because he had to cross a big sea. And the ship would have to be built entirely of mahogany wood, and be put together with copper nails and covered with copper plate, or it would not stand the long voyage.

Faith went to the king and demanded the ship, which the king promised him. But he did not possess such a ship, and so had to get one built, which took some time. When it was finished, Faith went again to his horse and

told him so, and the horse said : "Now go back to the king and demand a hundred barrels of meat, a hundred barrels of wheatmeal, baked into bread, and a hundred barrels of worms ! Then you must have a hundred handcarts, each of which must be able to hold two barrels, and two hundred leather traces, for the crew to pull them by ; because you will have to travel a good bit on land, when you have come to the end of the earth." Faith went again to the king and got all he asked for, and had it put on board the ship. Then he went back to his little grey horse and told him what he had done, and the horse said : "Now, first give me a barrel of oats, then take off my halter and go on board with an easy mind !" Faith did as he was told, and just when he was about to pull off from the shore a white poodle dog came jumping aboard and lay down at Faith's feet. He understood, and was glad to know he should have a friend and helper with him on the voyage.

The ship glided quickly through the waves, so that, the wind being always favourable, they soon found themselves upon the wide ocean. Then, following the poodle's advice, Faith had the hundred barrels of worms thrown into the water as a gift to the fishes, and the empty barrels were also thrown into the sea for the whales to play with. And all the fishes came and enjoyed the toothsome meal, and all the whales gambolled around the ship and played ball with the barrels. And so they sailed on until they came to the land at the end of the earth ; and there they went ashore and put the hundred barrels of meat and the hundred barrels

of bread on the handcarts, and the two hundred men who formed the crew took hold of the traces, two men to each cart, and pulled inland. After a while they met a great pack of wolves and bears, howling and fighting with each other from sheer starvation. Faith gave them the hundred barrels of meat, and the beasts were content and let Faith and his men travel on in peace. Then he met with a troop of giants who were quarrelling and fighting, because they had only one loaf of bread amongst them, and they were all starving with hunger. So Faith gave them the hundred barrels of bread, and they were happy and made room for Faith and his dog and his men, and said : "Thank you, we have been here for a hundred years, fighting with each other without ever getting a bite of bread. If ever you are in need of help, you can rely on us."

Then Faith sent back all his men to the ship, and he and his dog travelled on until they beheld the castle glittering in the sun. "Now we must wait," said the dog, "till the right time has come, for nobody can get into the castle except during three hours of the day. There are ever so many poisonous serpents and dragons lying around the castle and they sleep only during the three hottest hours of the day, and so it is then that we must try to get past them alive." When the right time had come Faith went into the castle with his poodle, who told him what he had to do. Gates and doors stood wide open and Faith went from one room to the other until he came to a room where a golden bird was perched fast asleep. It had the same kind of

feathers as Faith had found, and Faith went softly up to it and pulled out its longest tail plume. The bird started up from its sleep, but even as it did so it changed into the most beautiful princess, just like the picture that Faith knew so well. "How did you get past my dogs?" she asked. "I gave them as much meat as they could eat." "How did you get past my giants?" she asked further. "I gave them as much bread as they wanted." "How did you get past my serpents and dragons?" "I chose the right time," answered Faith. "What do you want here?" she then asked. "I have come here to take you to a king in a distant land who wants to make you his queen, and now you must follow me," said Faith. "Yes, to-morrow I will come," she answered, "but now you must come to dinner with me and eat something." They then went to a hall where there stood a table ready set with many plates and dishes, and they sat down, but Faith would eat only from the topmost dish and would touch nothing else, for that was what his poodle had told him to do, and he took good care not to disobey his old friend. Then the princess took Faith through the castle and showed him all its splendours, and, strange to say, there was not a single living being to be seen, except the princess who had been a bird. Then she showed him a magnificent bedroom with many beds and told him to lie down in one of them and sleep till morning. But Faith said that he would sleep by the gate of the castle with his dog beside him, and so he did.

The next day Faith went to the princess and asked her whether she would go with him now. "No," she said, "you must first find me among these skeins of silk," and at the same moment she vanished, and there lay on the table a large bundle of skeins of silk of all colours. But Faith knew what to do for his dog had told him and he picked out one skein which was slightly darker than the others and drew a knife from his pocket and pretended to cut it in two. Instantly the princess stood by his side and begged him not to cut it as her life depended on that skein of silk. Then she invited Faith again to eat with her, but this time he ate only from the bottom-most dish, and left the others untouched. Again she tried to persuade him to sleep in one of the beds, but Faith slept as before under the gateway with his dog. When the third day came the princess declined to follow Faith until he had sought for her in a bundle of straw in which she hid herself. Faith picked out one straw which was slightly lighter than the others and pretended as before that he was going to cut it. Then the princess stood beside him again and begged him not to do so ; she was willing to follow him now. First she went all through the castle, locking every door and taking away every key, and finally she locked the big gate and took with her the key of it also. When all was done she had a heavy bunch of keys to carry. Then she and Faith left the castle together and walked on until they came to the sea, when they went on board the ship, hoisted the sails, and set out for home, favoured by a gentle breeze.

Midway on their voyage the Princess watched for a suitable opportunity to throw her bunch of keys overboard, but the poodle saw her in the act and informed his master, who immediately begged his friends the fishes to get him the keys. They had not forgotten the fine feast of worms that Faith had treated them to, and every one, big and small, set about looking for them. But the search took a long time, and no keys could be found, for the sea is very large and deep and has many mountains and valleys and holes and caves at its bottom. Especially were the little whitings very sad and they began to weep, and it is on that account they have red eyes until this day. But at last an old swordfish came swimming along with the bunch of keys. He had found them between two large stones, where they had stuck so fast that he had broken his jaw when he tried to tear them off, and thence it comes that until this day swordfishes have one part of their jaw long and the other part short. Faith took the bunch of keys and put it carefully away, without letting the princess know that he had it.

At last they arrived in the country of the king who had sent Faith on his journey. The old king was greatly delighted at seeing the princess, who was as young and as beautiful as she had ever been, and he declared that he was going to marry her at once. But she said that was impossible until her own castle stood beside the king's palace, and until that condition was fulfilled no marriage could be thought of.

The king sent at once for Faith, and told him that it was all very well to have brought him the princess, but he could not be satisfied unless he had her castle too. Why had he not brought that also? He must fetch it, or else his life would be forfeited. Then Faith felt very miserable, and went to his little grey horse that was standing in his stall again, and told him of his new trouble. He might just as well die, he said, for it would be impossible to accomplish this new task, and besides, he did not care to live to see the beautiful young princess made the old king's wife. "Well, that is the result of picking up the second feather," replied the horse. "Did I not tell you that you would regret it? But I am able to help you this time also, although in the end you will have to die all the same. Go to the king and demand a new ship, exactly like the last one, with the same number of sailors, and with exactly the same cargo."

Faith did as he was told, and obtained everything he asked for, and to make a short story of it, everything happened just as before: the poodle went with him, the fish got the hundred barrels of worms, and the whales got the empty barrels to play with; Faith landed in the country at the end of the earth, the bears and wolves got the hundred barrels of meat, and the giants the hundred barrels of wheaten bread. When they came to the castle, which was glistening like the sun, the giants laid hold of it and carried it down to the shore, just as it stood, and there all the whales came swimming along, and carried it on their broad backs

across the sea and pushed it right on to the shore, so that it stood close beside the king's castle.
When the princess was told that her castle had arrived, and that the marriage could now take place, she said the castle was of no use to her if she had not the keys of it, and these had been lost during the voyage. The king however said that there would be no difficulty as far as that was concerned, because there were plenty of locksmiths in the country, but, although he sent for every one of them, there was not a single locksmith among them able to make a key that would fit any of the locks Then the king sent for Faith and threatened him with death if he did not succeed in procuring the keys. This time, however, Faith was not much troubled for he had the bunch of keys, which he sent to the princess with the hint that surely the marriage could now take place.
But the princess said there was one other thing that she must have before she could consent, and that was a bottle of the "Water of Life" and a bottle of the "Water of Death." She must have these two, and as Faith had accomplished everything else so easily he could surely procure the water. The king sent again for Faith and told him that all that he had done until now was of no value if he could not get him the "Water of Life" and the "Water of Death." He must do that without delay, or else his life should be ended at the gallows.
Down went Faith again to the stable to his little grey horse and told him the king's latest demands, adding

that he did not wish to live any longer, he had come only to say good-bye to his horse, and then he did not care who hanged him, it was all the same to him. "Yes," said the horse, "that is your reward for picking up the third feather; I told you that you would repent it. However, I'll try once more to help you out of your trouble, although you will have to die all the same in the end. Go up to the king and demand two silver flasks from him; on one must be engraved the words: 'Water of Life,' on the other, 'Water of Death.' Then saddle me and we shall set out once more."

Faith obtained the two silver flasks, mounted his little steed, and rode away. The princess was standing at the window, and when she saw him riding forth on the grey horse, she said: "Yes, indeed, if you have such a helper you are sure to succeed." Faith rode whither his horse carried him, and that was a long way over hill and dale into a strange country. When they came to a thick forest, the grey horse stopped and said to Faith that he must dismount and go to a certain tree, in which he would see a raven's nest. There he was to wait until the old birds had left their nest, when he was to climb up, kill one of the young birds, and leave beside it in the nest the flask for the Water of Life.

Faith did exactly as the grey horse told him, and stayed close by the nest, which he watched most carefully. Soon he saw one of the parent birds come back, and on seeing his dead nestling the raven took the flask and flew away with it. He returned in a short time and sprinkled some of the contents on the dead bird, which

revived at once. Then Faith ran to the tree, climbed to the nest, and having driven the old bird away, took the flask, which was still half full. The grey horse now told him to catch a viper, and tap it gently on the head so that it could not bite him, but not otherwise to hurt it. Then he was to climb the tree again, tie the viper to the nest, and put the flask for the Water of Death beside it. Faith did so, whereupon the raven came back to the nest, seized the flask and flew away with it. After a little time he came back with the flask and sprinkled some of the contents on the viper, and that killed it at once. Seeing this, Faith quickly climbed the tree and took away the flask, which had still quite a quantity of the water in it.

Now that the princess had the two kinds of water she made no longer any objections to her marriage, but she said that she must make sure first that the water was of the right kind, to which the king agreed, but neither he nor anybody else was anxious to try the water. "Let him come who has fetched it," said the king. "He brought it, so it is for him to try it." Faith was accordingly sent for. The princess sprinkled him with the Water of Death, and he fell dead like a corpse. Then she sprinkled him with the Water of Life, and Faith rose again alive, such a handsome man as had never been seen before. Then the old king said it was a fine thing to be so fresh and young and beautiful, and he begged the princess to treat him in the same way. The princess consented and sprinkled the king, first

with the Water of Death and then with the Water of Life, so that he was much more handsome than he had ever been. But he was not satisfied yet, and demanded to have the water poured over him once more, to which the princess consented. She then sprinkled him with the Water of Death, but when she took the flask of the Water of Life she found that it was empty, and so she said: "The Water of Life is done. Let the king remain dead." And then she asked: "Who has now a better right to be king of the country than the man who has accomplished all these things, which nobody else could have done; who has fetched me from the end of the world, has set my castle here, got the keys from the bottom of the sea, and procured the Waters of Life and Death?" All agreed that Faith had the best right, and no one ventured to contradict her, for there was still some Water of Death left in the flask. And so Faith was proclaimed king, and the princess, the most beautiful and most intelligent woman in the world, consented to marry him.

On the wedding-day Faith went alone into the stable to his little grey horse, for it was to him that he owed everything, and the grey horse said to him, "I have helped you so often now render me a service in return; take a sword and cut off my head, lay it beside my tail and bless it three times. "No, my good horse," said Faith, "I cannot do that." "You must and shall do it," said the horse, "it is for my own benefit." Then Faith felt that he must obey him and so he took a sword, cut off the horse's head, laid it beside its tail and

blessed it three times. As he concluded, there stood before him the brother of the princess, a beautiful prince, who had been bewitched just as she had been. The young men went into the castle, hand in hand, and there was joy beyond compare, and the marriage festivities lasted a whole fortnight. King Faith and his queen and her brother lived happily together, and for all I know to the contrary they are alive this very day!

The Lass of Söndervand

THERE lived, once upon a time, a farmer who had three sons ; the eldest was called Peter, the second Paul, and the third Esbeen. Peter and Paul were a couple of smart active lads ; they could see and hear, laugh and play, plough, and sow, mow and thresh, and were of great use to their father ; but the youngest was a poor silly lad who didn't care about anything in the world and never worked ; he spoke never a word but wandered about as if asleep, or lay by the fireside and stirred the ashes, wherefore they called him Esbeen Ashfiest.

The farm was a fairly good one with fertile fields and green meadows, but right in the middle of these lay a piece of waste land covered with big boulders and overgrown with heather. Here Esbeen liked best of all to lie, to gaze up at the clouds or to sleep and dream. Peter and Paul, however, did not want to let the piece of land lie fallow and asked their father's permission to dig it up ; it would repay their trouble well, they said, for the soil was very good indeed. Their father allowed them to make trial, although, he said, the land was supposed to belong to the fairies ; but that was a piece of old superstition which nobody need trouble about.

So Peter and Paul set to work with a will ; they cleared off all the stones and put them on a big heap and then they began to plough. In the newly ploughed field

they sowed wheat which sprang up well and stood through the whole winter, and next spring grew as no wheat before had ever grown. Not one of all their fields looked anything like this one up till the time of St. John's Day, but then all their joy came to a sudden end, for right on the eve of midsummer's day the whole crop was destroyed in a strange manner; everything looked as if it had been trampled upon, every blade had been broken and would never rise again. No one could make out how this had happened, but there was nothing left for the brothers but to plough up the field, and leave it as pasture for the cattle.

Next spring the grass on that field was higher and finer than anywhere else, but then the same thing happened again; on midsummer's day when they were about to mow it, all the grass was found to have been laid waste again and there was no profit to be got from the whole field. So they ploughed it all up again and let it lie fallow the whole winter through, but in the following spring they sowed it with flax; this crop grew well, and before St. John's Day all the flax was in bloom and Peter and Paul rejoiced in the glorious sight. But they had not forgotten what had happened in the two previous years, so they agreed that one of them should keep watch during midsummer's night in order to see whether anyone would attempt to lay waste their crop again. Peter being the elder, undertook this task; he was a strong smart lad, and taking a heavy cudgel with him he sat down beside the large heap of stones which they had gathered together when they first ploughed

the ground. It was a lovely evening, the air was bright, calm and mild, and Peter intended to keep awake, but he soon fell asleep. About midnight he was awakened by a noise of terrible howling and roaring through the air, and the earth below him began to tremble. He looked around ; the sky was pitch black, but out of the darkness there shone forth something red that looked like a fiery dragon, so that Peter was terribly frightened and took to his heels and fled to the farm.

Although there was no sign of any storm during the night, it was found in the morning that all the flax was trampled down and the whole harvest was destroyed. They were all very much annoyed at that, but especially Paul, who said that Peter had acted like a big fool and had run away from his post without finding out who it was that did the damage year after year. Next year they sowed the field with buckwheat and now it was Paul's turn to keep watch. He also sat down beside the stones and tried to keep awake, but of course he too fell asleep and only awoke about midnight when he heard the same noise that Peter had heard and felt the earth tremble beneath him. As before, the sky was black as pitch and Paul saw the fiery dragon which came nearer and nearer, and then all at once the whole field began to move up and down like a sheet and there was such a humming and roaring in his ears that Paul almost lost his senses. Then, as he could stand it no longer, he ran wildly from the field and was glad to get home with a whole skin. Next morning it was seen that all the

buckwheat was trampled down and the field looked as flat as the floor of the sitting-room.

Then Peter and Paul decided not to waste more labour on the ground and next spring it grew a large crop of grass, flowers, and weeds. There were white anemones, blue cornflowers, and red poppies, and among these the heather began to peep forth again. Now nobody cared any more about the field except Esbeen ; he rejoiced in it more than ever, and he often lay down on it and looked up to the clouds. And late on the eve of St. John's Day he stole out to the field in secret ; he had been sleeping the greater part of the day because he had made up his mind to keep watch himself this time. He wanted to find out what uncanny things went on there during that fateful night, whether it was fairies or any other creatures. Beside the heap of stones stood a very high old ash tree which was many hundred years old ; Peter and Paul had allowed it to stand there unmolested because it formed a boundary mark, and at the foot of it lay some of the biggest stones that they had dug up. All the other stones they had heaped round the trunk of the tree so that it now stood right in the midst of them. Esbeen climbed up the tree, sat very quiet, and remained awake till midnight. Then he heard a howling and roaring that shook the air, and he saw the sky grow black as if it were being covered with a big black curtain, and from out the blackness there came a fearsome apparition made visible by a lurid light, which looked like a fiery dragon with three heads and three long tails. The nearer it drew, the more violent

grew the storm, and a mighty whirlwind dashed down upon the field and circled over it, breaking every stem and blade as if it were trampled under foot; the old ash tree shook in its branches, and the very stem began to shake so that Esbeen had to hold fast to the branches for fear of being torn from his perch. But all at once everything became peaceful again, the sky assumed its former brightness and instead of a fiery dragon with three heads Esbeen beheld something that looked like three big white swans. When these came closer they were like three female shapes in feathery garb with great white wings and long tails fluttering behind them, and they came down from the air close to the tree in which he sat. Then they dropped their feather coverings, the wings shrivelled up, and at the foot of the tree there lay three white veils as fine as a spider's web. But the fairies themselves darted out into the field and danced a round dance, holding each other's hands and singing at the same time. Esbeen had never heard anything so beautiful, nor had he ever seen anything like these three young maidens, who were dressed all in white with golden crowns on their heads.

For a long time Esbeen sat quite still and enjoyed the lovely sight. He did not dare to stir for fear of scaring away those beautiful quaint birds, but when the maidens, continuing their dance, moved to some distance from the tree, he silently slid down, snatched up the three white veils, and climbed back to the tree with them. The three Swan-Princesses had not noticed the theft; they continued singing and dancing on the field until it

was three hours past midnight. Then they returned to the foot of the tree to put on their feathery garments, but, alas! they were gone. They ran about searching everywhere until at last they spied the young lad high up in the tree. Then they spoke to him and said that he must have taken their veils, and when he admitted this they begged and prayed that he should restore them, otherwise they would be unhappy for ever, and they wept and begged him to return the veils, promising to give him so much gold and silver for them that he would be richer than the king of the land. But Esbeen sat gazing at them. Oh! how beautiful the three were. And at last he said that he would return their veils only if one would consent to be his wife. "Indeed, no!" said the first. "No, certainly not," said the next, but the third, who was the youngest of the princesses, said: "Yes, I will, but now give us back our veils." The first two then got back their veils but to the third he returned hers only when she had given him her hand, had kissed him and put a ring on his finger with the promise to return next midsummer's night and marry him. "We are three sisters," she said, "the daughters of a king, and we spent our youth in a castle that stood on this very spot. But a very long time ago we were taken away by a wicked witch who is keeping us prisoners ten thousand miles from here. Only once every year on midsummer's night are we permitted to fly hither and visit our old home. You must build on this spot a castle in which our marriage can be held, you must fit up everything as

in a royal palace, and you can invite as many guests as you like except the king who rules this country. To get the necessary money for the building of the castle you only need to break off a branch of the tree on which you have been sitting and strike with it the largest stone that lies at its foot and say : " For Lena, the Lass of Söndervand ! " then the stone will turn and below it you will find everything that you want. With a stroke of the branch and with the same words you will be able to open and close your treasure-chamber at will. And now, farewell till then ! " Thereupon she wrapped the veil around her head as her sisters had already done ; it fell in large folds over her and spread out like two large wings, and then all three flew into the air, looking at first like three white swans, but higher and higher they rose and soon they were out of sight, even before the first sunbeam fell upon the field. Esbeen stood there for a long time and looked after them quite confused with all that he had seen and heard, but after a while he roused himself, broke off a branch from the ash tree and struck the largest stone with it, saying : " For Lena, the Lass of Söndervand ! " Immediately the stone turned over and under it was the entrance to a royal treasure chamber filled with gold and precious stones, gold and silver money, costly jewellery, beautiful drinking-horns and candlesticks and all kinds of ornaments for a king's table. Esbeen took as much money as he could carry and then struck the stone again repeating the same words, and went home to his father's farm. His father and his brothers scarcely knew him, for he

was no longer like the same man when he entered their room; he was now agile and gay, his hair brushed smoothly over his head, and his eyes bright and sparkling. Then he said to them that he knew now why the field had been devastated all these years and that nothing was to be sown on it, but that a large castle was to be built there, and in it his marriage was to take place next midsummer's night. At first they thought that he had lost his senses, but when they saw all the gold and silver money he had brought home they changed their minds and said he might do whatever he liked.

And now he engaged builders and carpenters, masons and joiners, and placed a master over them, and told him that a royal castle was to be built and finished within a year. He gave him all the money that was required, for he got all that he needed in his treasure hoard. And now there commenced a time of industry without rest, with axe and saw, with plane and hammer, and when St. Walpurgis' day had come the castle stood proudly finished with turrets and pinnacles, with copper roof and gilded weather vanes, and Esbeen invited all the people in the village and all his friends to the marriage.

There had, of course, been much gossip about the building of the castle, and no less did people talk about the great marriage that was to take place in the new castle on Midsummer's Eve. But all were most curious to know who the bride was to be, for no one knew her name. And then it happened one day, a

short time before midsummer, when all the people had been invited, that Esbeen's father met the king, who had been out riding, and had passed the new castle of which he had heard so much. The farmer politely doffed his cap to the king, who returned his greeting, and told him that he had heard of the grand marriage which he was preparing for his son. "I should like very much," said the king, "to see him and his young bride." To this the farmer replied that it would be a great honour for him and his family if the king himself would come to the marriage. The king accepted the invitation with pleasure, and rode on his way.

The marriage day had come, the guests had arrived, and the king was also there. Of course Esbeen was there, but the bride had not arrived. Then the people began to talk, and said that there must be something wrong, that Esbeen had only dreamt of this bride, and that she would never turn up. When it came toward the sunset on Midsummer's Day Esbeen went out in front of the castle and looked up into the air. "Eh, is it from there she's coming?" said the people. "Ah, well, it's likely to be one of those bees that Esbeen has in his bonnet." But Esbeen said never a word, for in the distance he had seen a flight of swans, and he knew that his bride was coming. And very soon a magnificent golden chariot drawn by six white horses drew up in front of the castle. Esbeen opened the door of the carriage, and there sat his bride in radiant beauty; but the first words that she uttered were: "Is the king here?" Of course Esbeen had to reply,

"Yes, but he has invited himself; I did not ask him to the marriage." "That makes no difference," said the bride. "If I enter this castle to-day as bride the king will be my bridegroom. You will lose your life and I shall be unhappy for ever, for I don't want to belong to anyone but you. You must come to me now whenever you can, and it must be before the year is out, or it will be too late. I dwell ten thousand miles from here, in a castle that lies south of the sun, west of the moon, and right in the middle of the world." And when she had said that the horses galloped away like the wind, and soon after Esbeen saw the swans soaring heavenward and vanishing in the clouds.

Then Esbeen took up his staff, left everything and set out into the wide world to find his lost bride. He turned his steps toward the south, and walked for days and weeks, and wherever he came he asked whether anybody knew the castle, but no one he met had ever heard of it. One day he came to a large forest, and there he saw a couple of men fighting fiercely with each other. Esbeen spoke to them and asked what they were fighting about. They told him that they were fighting about an old hat that was lying on the ground. It was all that their father, who had just died, had left them. "But that hat is not worth much," said Esbeen. The woodmen, however, told him that it was not like other hats, and that whosoever wore it would be invisible, and that was why they both wanted it. And then they began attacking each other again, shouting and fighting. "Ah, well," said Esbeen, "you

go on fighting until you are tired." And with that he picked up the hat, put it on his head, and walked on his way.

After he had walked for a good while he came upon two other woodmen who were also fighting in a most vicious manner; they too were quarrelling over what their father had left, but this time it wasn't a hat, but a pair of old boots, which enabled him who wore them to cover a hundred miles with every step, and that was why they were both so eager to possess the prize. When Esbeen heard what they were quarrelling about he advised the men to run a race; he would throw a stone for which they were to run, and the one who got first to the place where it had fallen should get the boots. They agreed; Esbeen threw the stone and they ran after it, but meanwhile Esbeen put on the boots, took one step, and was instantly a hundred miles away.

Again he met a couple of men who were fighting over their father's goods, but this time the inheritance was an old rusty pocket-knife. They said that if you opened this and pointed it at anyone, the knife had the power of making the victim fall down dead, but if you shut it again and touched the dead man with it he would come to life. "Give me the knife," said Esbeen, "I know how to settle the matter. I have settled such disputes before." When he got the knife in his hand, wishing to try its power, he pointed it at the two men, who both fell dead; then he closed it, touched them with it, and they immediately rose again. Esbeen then put

the knife in his pocket, bade the men good-bye, put on his hat, and in one moment was a hundred miles away. And so Esbeen walked on until night, when he came to a little house that lay right in the middle of a huge forest. In the house lived an old woman who was so old that moss grew on her, but Esbeen greeted her kindly, and asked her whether she knew where the castle was situated that lay south of the sun, west of the moon, and right in the middle of the world. She said she had never heard of it, but as she was mistress over all the beasts of the field she would call them together and inquire whether any of them had perhaps heard of it. And then she blew her whistle, and all sorts of wild animals appeared ; they came rushing along in wild leaps, all except the fox, who came slinking sulkily behind, and was in a bad temper because he had just been about to steal a goose when he was summoned by the whistle. But neither he nor any other animal knew anything about the castle, and the old woman told Esbeen to go to her sister, who was mistress of all the fish in the sea. This sister dwelt three hundred miles away, but the old woman told him that the fox would show him the right way to get there.

It didn't take very long for Esbeen to reach the dwelling of the old woman who was mistress of all the fish, but she also knew nothing of the castle, nor did any of the fishes whom she called together to ask about it. "Then you must go to my sister who is mistress of all the birds of the air," said the old woman, "if she cannot help you nobody can. She lives three hundred

miles from here straight to the south, on the top of a high mountain which you cannot fail to find."

Then Esbeen set out once more and soon came to the mountain of the birds, but the old woman who lived there had never heard anything of the castle that lay south of the sun, west of the moon, and right in the middle of the world. Then she, too, blew her whistle, and all the birds came from all parts of the world. Their mistress asked if they knew anything about the castle, but none had ever been so far. "But how is it that the old eagle is not here?" she said, and blew her whistle once more, and then the mighty eagle came with a roaring noise and perched on the top of a tree. "Whence comest thou?" asked the woman. "Thou hast forfeited thy life for thou art late." "I have come from the castle that lies south of the sun, west of the moon, and right in the middle of the world," said the eagle, "it is there I have my nest and my young ones, and I had to provide for them before I left." Then the old woman who was mistress of all the birds of the air said that his life should be spared if he could take Esbeen to that castle, and this the eagle promised to do after a night's rest.

Early next morning Esbeen mounted the eagle's back and the great bird flew high and higher into the air and far across the sea. After a time the eagle said: "Dost thou see anything in front of us?" "I see a big black wall straight ahead," answered Esbeen. "Oh, that is the earth and we must get right through it," said the bird, "hold on as tight as thou canst, for if thou perish

my life will be forfeit." And then he flew right into that pitch black hole with Esbeen clinging very tight, and soon they saw daylight again. After flying for some time longer the bird asked again, "Seest thou aught in front?" "It looks like a mountain of glass," said Esbeen. "That is the water that we must pass through," said the bird, "hold tight again for if thou perish my life is forfeit." And thus they swooped right through the water and came safely out on the other side. Again they flew on till once more the bird asked, "Canst thou see aught in front of us?" "I see nothing but flames of fire," said Esbeen. "We must get through those," said the bird, "crouch well under my feathers and hold fast. If thou perish my life is forfeit." And then he flew straight into the fire, but they got through safely. After some time the bird came down in a meadow and said, "Now let us rest for a little for we have another five hundred miles before us." "I shall carry you now," said Esbeen, and he took the eagle on his back and completed the distance in five leaps. "Oh, we have come ten miles too far," said the eagle, "can you not retrace your steps?" "No, I cannot do that," said Esbeen. "Then we must fly again," said the eagle; and so they came safely to the castle that lay south of the sun, west of the moon, and right in the middle of the world. It was a castle the like of which did not exist anywhere else; it shone like pure gold from top to bottom.

When Esbeen came to the castle, he sat down before the gate and waited until he saw a serving-maid enter.

He flew straight into the fire

To her he said: "Greet Lena, the Lass of Söndervand, from me and ask her for a cup of wine for a tired wanderer." The maid took the message to the princess who bade that her own golden cup should be filled with wine for the stranger, and when Esbeen had drunk he threw the ring that the princess had given him on their first meeting into the cup. The princess recognized the ring at once, and hastening to the gate embraced Esbeen and took him into the palace. "Now I have got you again," she said, "but you must leave me at once and fly back the whole long way disguised in my feathered garb, for if the witch who keeps us enchanted here sees you she will turn you into stone." "Oh, I have a remedy for that," said Esbeen, "just show me where she is." He then put on the hat that made him invisible, took out his knife and pointed it at the witch, who fell to the ground dead. Then, commanding that the wicked creature should be buried twenty fathoms deep under the earth, he prepared for the celebration of his marriage with the princess, and the festivities which then began lasted so long that they have not yet come to an end.

And I have been at Esbeen's marriage, too, and as the floor was made of paper and I danced in a pair of big wooden shoes I fell through the floor and got caught in a big spider's web. They used the web to load a big gun with, and as nobody noticed me I was shot out and flew here where ever since I have been sitting on a tree, and now I am telling you this beautiful fairy story.

The Wishing-Box

A GREAT many years ago there lived, far away in a woodland district, a man who owned a small croft. He was very poor and could just manage to keep a pair or small brown nags to work his land in the summer and to cart his scanty supply of brush-wood from the neighbouring forest in the winter; in fact, he lived from hand to mouth. He was married and had one little boy, called Hans, but one day he was presented with three baby girls all at once. That was of course a heavy additional burden to the poor man and he thought he would now be obliged to work in the night as well as during the day to feed all these hungry mouths. One night when he was toiling out in the field by moonlight, an old man came up to him and began to talk, saying how sorry he was for a man who had to work both day and night. The farmer explained that he had to work thus to get bread for his family; and the old man offered to free him from all his troubles if he would promise to give him his three little girls when they were three years of age. He would present him at once with a box which possessed the power of granting every wish, if its owner tapped on the lid. The poor man felt that he could not resist such a fine offer, for he might not be able to keep his family from starving if he refused it. He therefore accepted the box, and the old man told him that he would return and fetch the little girls when they were three years old.

When the old man had left him, the farmer anxious to test the power of the box, tapped it with his finger, and behold ! there stood before him a huge giant who said : " What does my master command ? " " If I am thy master," said the man, " I command thee that early to-morrow morning a fine estate be ready for me two miles from here. Let there be everything in keeping with it, inside the home as well as outside ; servants and cattle, furniture and implements, silver and gold and all other good things, so that there shall be no finer estate in the whole kingdom." Thereupon the giant disappeared and the man went indoors and retired to rest. Early next morning he again tapped the box, and again the giant stood before him and asked : " What does my master command ? " " I command that in two hours a coach shall be at the door with four horses and coachman and footman to take us to our new estate."

Then he went to his wife and told her that he had sold his croft, and that she must dress herself and the children in their best clothes, for in two hours they would depart. " Ah me," she said, " what is to become of us and our poor children now ? " When the coach with four fine horses arrived, she thought her husband had exchanged his croft for it and she was in despair ; she entered the carriage with her children but sobbed quietly to herself during the whole journey. They drove away at great speed and soon arrived at a magnificent mansion, where menservants and maidservants hastened out to receive them as if they had been in the service of their new master for years.

The farmer and his wife now lived on their new estate in great comfort and splendour ; they had maids and nurses for the children, they all wore fine clothes, and the three girls grew up into pretty and well-behaved children, the pride and joy of their mother. But the boy Hans was peculiar and shy ; often when he was indoors he would cry ; he liked best of all to roam about outside ; in the stable or among the hay-stacks, and the barnyards. He did not seem as bright as other children, and people called him 'silly Hans.'

Now the farmer had never told his wife about the old man's visit and the bargain he had made, and on the day when the little girls were three years old, and the father knew that they would be taken from him he drove away with his wife to pay a visit, enjoining the servants not to let the children out of doors. At about noon a carriage came driving into the courtyard, glittering like the sun, and the servants rushed to the doors and windows to see who the grand visitor might be. The three little girls were also curious and, finding a door ajar, they squeezed through and ran to the carriage. Instantly some one pulled them inside and drove away with them, deep into the woods, where the carriage disappeared. In the evening the father and mother came home and found the servants weeping and sobbing, for the children had not returned. The mother also began to weep and was quite inconsolable, notwithstanding that the father told her that the children would surely come back, and that whoever had taken them away would do them no harm.

Behold! there stood before him a huge giant

A number of years passed, the mother hoping against hope for the return of her little girls, or at least for some news about them and never ceasing to mourn. But no news came and she grieved more and more until, consumed by sadness, she died. Soon after her husband died also; he no longer took any pleasure in his wealth and he was perpetually tormented by his uneasy conscience.

Now silly Hans became heir to all the wealth; he was still as strange as ever and roamed about as before, caring for nothing in the house or on the estate. There were others, however, who made up for his indifference; these were dishonest servants and faithless stewards, and Hans was robbed and cheated by them all. But he never minded, until one day—scarcely two years after he had succeeded to the estate—the king's bailiff's took possession of everything, telling him that he could go wherever he liked, for he possessed nothing except the clothes he was wearing. This was no grief to Hans, indeed he was very glad, but before taking his departure he went through the house from room to room, and he discovered a great many apartments he had never been in before. At last he came to a bedroom where an old sheepskin coat was hanging and beside it stood a big knotted stick. "They will come in very handy now," thought Hans, "the coat will be useful for the cold weather," and he put it on, took the stick in his hand, and walked out of the place for which he had cared so little.

He wandered until he came to a forest, where he lay

down to sleep, for at all times he was very fond of sleeping. When he awoke, he felt a pain in the side on which he had lain, and on searching he found something hard in his pocket. It was the little wishing-box. He turned and moved it to and fro but could not open it; then he tapped it with his hand and at once a huge giant stood beside him and said: "What does my master command?"—"Am I thy master?" asked Hans. "Yes, indeed," said the giant; "thy father was my master and thou hast inherited the box from him, so thou art now my master." "Well, if I may command, I should like to have a fiddle, on which I could play so merrily that all who heard it would be compelled to dance." In a moment he had his fiddle, and played and played on it. He felt very happy, indeed, he had never felt so happy in all his life.

Then Hans hung the fiddle on his back and wandered out into the wide world, and wherever he went, he played to the people and they danced and were merry. Thus Hans never suffered any hardship, because everybody gave him food and shelter, for such a fiddler was welcome everywhere. He went from one country to another, and one day he passed a fine royal palace, in the garden of which the king's daughter was playing at ball with her maidens. He stopped in front of the gate and gazed and gazed as though he could never tire. He could look at nobody but the king's daughter, because she was so wonderfully beautiful, and Hans thought that if he could only see her every day he would be happy. He accordingly entered the king's

palace and asked whether there was any work he could do, and as the king's flocks needed a shepherd, Hans was engaged to watch them. He went out the whole day long into the fields with the sheep and played his fiddle to them, while they danced to it, as if they had been taught to do so. It was most entertaining to watch, and in the evening, when Hans drove his sheep home, he made them dance outside the king's garden where the princess was walking about with her maidens. This made them laugh merrily until Hans ceased playing and drove his flock into their fold.

The princess liked very much to hear Hans play, but especially did she enjoy watching the sheep dance. One day she went out into the fields and asked Hans to let her see this. Hans said that he would do so only if she promised to become his wife; at which she laughed, thinking that one might promise anything to such a foolish fellow, without being compelled to keep one's promise. She accordingly said "Yes," and Hans at once began to play, making his sheep dance so merrily that the princess laughed more heartily than she had ever done before. Next day she came out again and once more wanted Hans to play and make his sheep dance. But Hans would not do so unless she gave him her promise in writing that she would become his wife. The princess thought that she might easily do so without being compelled to keep her promise, and wrote out what Hans wanted, signing it with her own name.

Next day Hans went to the king, and, telling him that

his daughter had promised to marry him, asked him to fix the wedding-day. The king laughed at him, thinking this was one of the shepherd's foolish ideas. But then Hans drew out his document and showed the king that the princess had given him her own signature. Thereupon the king sent for his daughter and asked her what she meant by signing her name to such a document; to which she replied that it was all a joke and meant nothing. The king, however, took the matter very seriously, and told her that what she had promised in writing she must fulfil, otherwise he could not carry out law and justice in the country. If people would not be bound by what they had promised in writing, and if she would not treat her signature as binding, his subjects would not obey his laws and decrees. She must marry the shepherd, whether she liked it or not.

So the wedding took place, but as soon as all the festivities were over, the king told his new son-in-law that he must now take his young wife to his own home, thinking, of course, that the shepherd would not have any place at all to which he might take her. Then Hans went outside the castle and tapped on his box. The giant appeared at once and asked: "What does my master command?" "I command thee to have a castle ready for me, two miles from here, so large and so magnificent that the king's palace cannot compare with it. I also want to have at the door a golden carriage with six horses, coachman and footman, and so splendid must it be that the king has not its equal." Scarcely had he uttered his wishes when the coach

stood there ready, and Hans went in again and told his wife that the carriage was there. Everybody ran out to see what kind of a vehicle the shepherd could have, and when the king saw the magnificent carriage he was overwhelmed by its grandeur. But Hans behaved as if the splendour were nothing at all, and told the king that he hoped he would soon pay them a visit at his castle, which was only two miles distant.

The carriage then rolled away, and the coachman drove to the new castle, as if he had been in the habit of doing so all his life. When the bride and bridegroom arrived man-servants and maid-servants stood ready to receive them and conducted them into their castle, which the princess found to be more richly furnished and luxurious than any castle she had ever seen.

In spite of all that, she was in a very bad humour, because she did not care for her husband, having had to marry him against her will. Although Hans did all he could to cheer her up, she remained sulky, and scarcely answered him when he spoke to her. When he offered to play to her on his fiddle, she asked to be spared that infliction ; in fact, Hans did not have a pleasant time of it, and it was little consolation to him that he had the most beautiful wife in the world. After a while he did not care to look at his fiddle at all, but went out daily with a gun, putting on his old sheepskin coat and taking his wishing-box in his pocket. When he came home from the hunt, he scarcely ever saw his wife, as she insisted on occupying one wing of the castle and letting Hans live in another.

Now there happened to be a young knight at the castle who found favour in the princess's eyes and was her companion all day long. He was astonished at what he saw; wealth and splendour everywhere, and the most lavish expenditure, yet there was no visible source from which the money came After a while he spoke to the princess about it, but she was equally at a loss to explain it. Then the young knight advised her to coax the secret out of Hans, and this she promised to do.

One evening, when Hans, as usual, came home from the hunt and was about to go to his room, a message came to him that the princess desired to speak with him. When he entered her apartments, he found that a splendid meal was set out ready for him, and that the princess was kinder to him than she had ever been before. She said that it was wicked to live in this miserable fashion, and that she meant to be more cheerful in future; that she was grateful to him for having lavished such wealth and comfort upon her, and as he was so kind and faithful she could not help loving him.

These words were like honey to Hans; he believed everything she said and felt happier that night than he had done for a long time. Next evening, when he returned from the hunt, he found his wife waiting for him in the castle yard, and on the third evening she had even come a long way from the castle to meet him, because, as she said, she felt frightened that the wild beasts might harm him. She was overwhelmingly tender and loving to him and said: "Now we are as

happy as we can be, and I thank thee for all the kindness thou hast shown me. There is only one thing I cannot understand, wilt thou not explain it to me?" Hans felt so happy that he promised her anything she wanted. "How does it come about, then," she asked, "that we possess everything in abundance and lack nothing? We spend large sums of money and yet have no income; how can that be possible?" Then Hans showed her the box and told her its history. "But, dear Hans," she said in reply, "thou shouldst not carry that box about with thee in this careless manner; thou mightest lose it, or it might be stolen from thee, and then all our wealth would be at an end. I think thou shouldst leave it at home with me, and then I shall be able to take good care of it." The next morning, therefore, Hans left the box in her bedroom and went out hunting as usual. The princess bade him a tender farewell and asked him when he would be back, because, she said, she would come to meet him.

When Hans was gone out of sight, she sent for her young knight, showed him the box and repeated all that Hans had told her. The two soon agreed what they would do, and the knight tapped on the box, whereupon the giant appeared and said: "What does my new master command to-day?" "I order thee to remove this castle just as it stands, and to carry it away and hang it up by four golden chains over the Red Sea." No sooner said than done, and in a moment nothing was to be seen of all the splendour.

Toward evening Hans set out on his way homeward. He was longing to meet his dear wife, and he looked and looked for her, because she had promised to meet him, but nobody appeared. He went further and further until he thought he must be near his home ; he looked for the castle but no castle could he see. Then suddenly he understood that he had been shamefully deceived by her whom he had thought to be his loyal wife, and he wandered away without aim and purpose through one thick forest after another, not caring whither he went.

But one day, toward evening, he came to a pond right in the middle of a dense wood, and there he saw a young woman washing clothes. "Good evening!" said Hans. "Good evening, and welcome my poor brother!" answered the woman, whom Hans did not recognize, although she had recognized him. It was one of the three little sisters who had been carried off when they were three years old. When she had explained who she was, he said to her : "Can you give me anything to eat? I am dying with hunger." She took him into her home, which was nothing but a cave in a wild forest, and after he had eaten she said to him : "Now thou must go away before my husband returns ; he is a wild bear, and if he sees thee, he will tear thee to pieces. He is not like other bears, but a king's son over whom a spell has been cast, and when he walks about in his form as a bear, he spares no human being except me." "No," said Hans, "thou must keep me here to-night ; I am too tired to walk

any farther." So she consented to keep him and hid him as well as she could in a cave at the back of the house. When the bear came home, he said: "Hoo, hoo, I smell human blood!" His wife luckily succeeded in appeasing him until the time came for him to throw off his bearskin and assume human shape, which occurred for six hours during every night. Then she told him about the brother who had come to her, and fetched Hans, so that he might relate all that had happened to him. At once the bear prince became his friend and said to him: "To-morrow I will take thee to thy other sister."

Next morning the bear said to Hans: "Come, mount my back!" and he trotted with him through the woods to a high mountain, there showing him the path he must take. When they parted the bear said: "Pull out a hair from my tail and take good care of it, for it will save thee and me."

Then Hans climbed up the mountain and found his sister, who recognized him at once. She was married to an eagle, who also was a young prince under the sorcerer's spell and a brother of the bear prince. She too had to hide Hans until her husband had cast off his disguise, and then the two became good friends. The next day the eagle took Hans upon his back and flew away with him to an island where his third sister dwelt. She was married to the third brother, who had been changed into a fish. When Hans bade farewell to the eagle, the latter said: "Pull a feather out of my tail; it will save thee and me." Hans stayed all night

with his third sister, and told his third brother-in-law all that had happened to him. "To-morrow, thou shalt mount my back," promised the fish prince, "and I will carry thee across the water as near as possible to the Red Sea, and there thou must pull a scale out of my tail; it will save thee and me. Then thou must call my brother the bear, and he will carry thee overland to the shores of the Red Sea; and when thou art there call my brother the eagle, and he will fly with thee through the air to thy castle."

The fish and the bear did their part; the eagle flew with Hans across the Red Sea—it was in the early morning—and they came to the castle which hung in the air by four golden chains, and the eagle circled all round the castle so that Hans could see into it from every side. The window of the princess's room stood wide open, and on a table stood the box which Hans knew so well, and there lay the princess in deep slumber. Hans bade the eagle carry him right up to the window, and then he took his box and tapped upon it. Immediately the giant appeared and asked: "What does my lawful master command?" "I command thee to take the princess and the false knight by the hair of their heads and fling them high up into the air, so that they may fall down crushed to atoms. Afterward carry this castle back to its former place." When that was done, Hans lay down to sleep, and he slept for seven days and seven nights, keeping the box beside him and never letting it out of his hand.

Having thus recovered his treasure, Hans resumed his

The giant flings the knight and the princess out of the castle

old manner of living ; he dwelt in his castle, but stayed in it only at night-time, roaming about the woods all day long with his gun in his hand. In this way passed week after week, year after year, until three years had gone by since Hans had found his three sisters and the three brothers-in-law who had helped him to recover his wishing-box and his castle. During all these years he had not once thought of them, and it was just as though he had slept away all memory of them. Then, one day when he was out in the woods and wanted to load his gun, he could not find anything to ram into it. He searched in the pockets of the old sheepskin coat that he was still wearing, and there found a bear's hair, an eagle's feather and a fish's scale. All at once his memory came back to him, and he pulled out his box and tapped on it. When the giant appeared and asked what he commanded, Hans answered: "Carry me at once to the living water in the deepest valley right below the highest mountain!" In a moment he was there. It was a place he had never seen before, just like the bottom of a deep well, and quite dark. He could see only one small speck of the blue sky high up in the distance. There was a little brook flowing from one side of the mountain to the other, and outside in front of the cave there sat an old white-haired woman at the door, with a little white cat huddled up on her lap.

"Has the end of time come?" said the old woman, "or shall I and my children at last be released from our hard fetters?" Then Hans took out the bear's hair, the eagle's feather and the fish's scale and laid them in

her lap. At the same moment the mountain burst asunder from end to end, and a royal castle stood there surrounded by beautiful gardens with glorious fruit trees, all laden with the most luscious fruit: the little brook with the living water meandered through the gardens. The old woman rose up and appeared like a queen, while the little white cat changed into a beautiful maiden dressed in white garments. "Come with me!" said the queen, and walked toward the castle, followed by Hans and the young princess. When they reached the open place in front of the castle, there came three golden carriages rolling along, and in each of them sat a royal couple with three little children in front of them. These were the king's three sons who had been transformed into a bear, an eagle, and a fish, and their queens were Hans' three sisters. They had brought their children with them, and all got out and embraced the old queen and the beautiful young princess. The princess was the sister of the king's three sons, who had been quite a little girl when her brothers were transformed into animals. Now it was discovered that it was the same sorcerer who had taken away Hans' sisters from their father and had given him the wishing-box in exchange, who had transformed the three young princes and had imprisoned the queen and her daughter. But the three princes had found the three sisters and fallen in love with them, and rescuing them from the old sorcerer's power had secretly married them. The wicked sorcerer had pursued them and out of revenge had put them all under his spell, which could not be

broken until the mother, who had to sit in the deepest valley under the highest mountain by the side of the living water, received a bear's hair, an eagle's feather, and a fish's scale.

Now the spell was broken and the whole family were merry together. Hans married the beautiful young princess, and nobody was happier than the young couple.

When the marriage festivities were past and the three couples had departed to their castle, which lay quite near that in which the old queen resided, Hans made the giant transport his own castle there also, and then he tapped once more on the box. "I command thee,' said he to the giant, "to tell me what I can do for thee, because thou hast worked enough for me." Then said the giant: "As my master commands. Thou canst give me the rest and peace for which I have longed for more than a thousand years. Throw the box into the fire!" Hans did so, and there came forth from the flames a report like thunder; a bluish smoke ascended from the box, rising higher and higher and assuming the shape of the giant, but ever so much larger, extending from the earth to the sky. Then all the smoke curled up and was blown away by the wind, looking just like an ordinary blue cloud.

But Hans and his young wife, his sisters and brothers-in-law, their old mother and all her grandchildren are still living happily and contentedly in the land of happiness by the shores of the living water.

Olaf the Mermaid's Son

IN Furreby, on the Skager Rack, there lived once upon a time a blacksmith, called Rasmus Natzen. He was a young man, and a handsome strong fellow into the bargain, but he had married quite early and had a number of young children, and as there was not much trade in the place, he made but a scanty living. He was industrious and hardworking and when there was nothing to do in the smithy he would go out fishing or would pick up wreckage on the seashore.

Now it once happened that he had set out all by himself, in his little boat, to fish for cod. He did not return that night or the next day, and everybody thought that he had perished at sea. But on the third day Rasmus landed again with his boat full of fish, larger and finer than had ever been seen before, and he himself was quite well, complaining neither of hunger nor of thirst. He explained that he had suddenly found himself in a thick mist and had lost his bearings, but he did not say where he had been during his absence ; that only came to light six years afterward. Then it was discovered that when he was far out at sea he had been caught by a mermaid and had been her guest for some days. After that he never went fishing again, nor did he need to do so, for the sea offered him rich booty in the shape of all kinds of wreckage. Many valuable things came to his hand and as in those days everybody was allowed

to keep what he found, the blacksmith soon became a well-to-do man.

When seven years had gone by since his last voyage, there came one morning to Rasmus, when he was in his smithy repairing a plough, a handsome young lad who said "Good morning, Father! My mother the Mermaid sends greetings to you. She said, as she had kept me for six years, you could now look after me in your turn for the next six." This stranger was a queer lad, more like a boy of eighteen than of six, and he was much bigger and stronger even than ordinary boys of that age. "Are you hungry?" asked the smith, and when Olaf, for that was the boy's name, said "Yes," the smith asked his wife to cut a slice of bread for the lad. She did so, and the boy put it into his mouth all at once and went back to his father, who asked him whether he had been given enough to eat. "No," said Olaf, "I had only a bite." So his father went indoors, took a whole loaf of bread, cut it through lengthways, put butter and cheese on each half and handed it to the boy. Olaf came back to the smithy in a short time, and his father asked him whether he had eaten enough now. "No," said the boy, "I am not half satisfied yet; I think I had better look out for another place where they will feed me more generously, for I can see I shall never get my hunger satisfied here."

He meant to start at once, as soon as his father had made him a good stick of iron to lean upon; it would have to be strong, to last him for some time. The smith handed him a rod of iron as thick as an ordinary

walking-stick, but Olaf twisted it round his finger; it was no good. Then the smith dragged along another rod, as thick as the pole of a farm waggon, but when Olaf bent it across his knee, it broke like a reed, and so the smith had to take all the iron he had in his smithy and weld it together into a huge bar. Olaf held it while his father forged out of it a cudgel that was heavier than the anvil. Then Olaf lifted the cudgel and thanked his father for his trouble. "Now, I will start, father! I have got my inheritance from you;" and saying this he stepped out into the country. The smith was heartily glad to be rid of this boy who would have eaten him out of house and home.

Olaf found his way to a large farm, and it so happened that the farmer himself was standing outside. "Where are you going?" he asked Olaf. "I am looking for a place where they need strong men and give them plenty to eat," replied Olaf. "Well," said the farmer, "I usually employ twenty-four men at this season of the year, but I have only twelve, so that I can give you work." "You may risk that," replied Olaf, "for I can easily do the work of twelve men, if you will give me as much food as they would eat." The farmer agreed to that and took Olaf into the kitchen, where he told the servants that the new farm hand was to have as much to eat as the other twelve men together.

It was toward evening when Olaf arrived at the farm, so he had no work to do that day, and when he had finished his supper, which consisted of a huge pot of porridge, he felt fairly satisfied and went to bed. He

slept well and long, and when the other labourers were already at their work Olaf was still sleeping like a sack of flour. The farmer was also about and he was anxious to learn how the new servant was getting on. As he could not see him anywhere he went into the men's sleeping-room and called out: "Get up, Olaf! You have overslept yourself." Olaf woke up and rubbed his eyes, saying: "Why, so I have! I must get up and eat my breakfast." Then he dressed and went into the kitchen, where he ate a huge cauldron of soup, and then inquired about his work.

It happened to be threshing day, and the other twelve men were already hard at work. There were twelve threshing-floors and six of them were occupied, two men to each floor. Olaf was told to thresh what the other six floors could hold, so he went in, took a flail and watched how the others used theirs, but when he tried to imitate them he smashed the flail into little bits with the very first stroke. There were several flails hanging on the wall, and Olaf tried one after the other, but it was of no use; at the first stroke they all went to pieces. He looked about for something stouter with which to thresh and found a large wooden beam. To this he nailed a horse's hide that happened to be hanging at the barn door to dry, and by means of another beam he managed to construct a flail, and finally set to work. Things seemed all right now, but unfortunately there was not room enough to wield the flail, for he hit the walls of the barn with each stroke. However, he knew how to get over that difficulty; he

simply lifted the roof from the barn and put it out in the field, then he carried all the sheaves into the middle of the floor and started threshing, Whenever he had finished a bundle he threw it outside and took the next that came handy, and so it happened that he threshed all the farmer's grain, rye and wheat, buckwheat and oats pell-mell, and threw it all into one tremendous heap. Then he picked up the roof, put it back in its place and went indoors to tell the farmer that he had finished his task.

The farmer refused to believe that the work could have been done in such a short time, and went out to see for himself, but he was terribly angry when he found all his good grain mixed up in this ruinous fashion. When, however, he saw the flail that Olaf had used, and learned how he had made room for himself to work in comfort, he was so frightened at the strength of his new servant that he dared not find fault with him. He merely told Olaf that he was glad he had finished his threshing, and that he would now have to winnow what he had threshed. Olaf asked what this meant, and was told that the corn must now be separated from the chaff, as they were now mixed up from floor to ceiling.

Olaf tried in several ways to accomplish this, but did not succeed at all, so at last he opened the doors on either side of the barn, then lay down at one end of the building and blew as hard as he could. In a moment all the chaff lay outside, like a huge sand-bank, while the grain was quite clean ; then he went and informed his master that he had finished his task. The farmer

said that he was satisfied and that he had no other work for him that day, so Olaf went into the kitchen where he was given as big a meal as he could eat. Then he slept soundly till supper-time.

But the farmer was sorely troubled, and asked his wife to suggest a plan by which they could get rid of that terrible fellow, for he did not dare to dismiss him. They sent for the steward, and among them they planned that next day, when all the men went into the forest to cut down trees, it should be given out that he who came home last with his load would be hanged, and surely it could easily be arranged that Olaf should be the victim. It was only necessary that they should start early in the morning and let Olaf sleep as long as he usually did. Accordingly, in the evening, when all the servants were sitting together in the kitchen, they began talking about their next day's work, and how hard it would be. One of them suggested that they should start very early in the morning, and, as an encouragement to get the work done as quickly as possible, they agreed that the one who came home last should lose his life on the gallows. Olaf laughed quietly, but had no objection to this plan.

Next morning the twelve men were up and stirring long before sunrise. They took all the best horses and carts, and started for the forest. But Olaf was still sleeping soundly, and his master rubbed his hands in glee, thinking to himself: "Let him sleep as long as he likes." However, at last Olaf awoke and thought it was time to get up, so he dressed himself and partook

of his breakfast in his usual leisurely fashion. Then he went to the stables to get his cart ready, but as the others had taken all the good vehicles, Olaf was compelled to hunt about until he found four old cart-wheels, which he fixed to an ancient cart-frame. He then yoked two sorry old nags to his wretched vehicle and started. When he came to the gate at the entrance to the forest he happened to break it, so he picked up a large stone, seven yards long and seven yards broad, and put it into the opening instead of a gate. When he joined the others they laughed and jeered at him, for they had been hard at work since sunrise, and had helped each other to cut down the heavy trees and to load them on their carts, which were all fully laden, with the exception of one. Now Olaf set to work: he seized an axe and tried to fell a tree, but that was no good, the blade bent and the handle broke in two. He then threw aside the axe, put his arms around one of the largest trees, and pulled it out, root and all; he next threw this tree on his cart, and then a second and a third and so on, until his cart was full. The other servants had forgotten all about their work. They stood and gaped in wonderment at this new method of tree-cutting, but suddenly they pulled themselves together, filled their last cart, whipped up their horses and drove home as fast as they could. When they had gone, Olaf yoked his horses to his cart and started to follow, but the cart was far too heavily laden, and the horses could not drag it from the spot. Olaf then unyoked them again, tied a rope round the cart and the

tree-trunks, and put the whole load on his back, but the horses he led behind by the bridle. When he came to the end of the wood, he found the other twelve men with their carts waiting there. They had not been able to get through owing to the heavy stone that Olaf had put into the opening. "What," he said, "are twelve men not able to lift that stone?" and he picked it up and flung it aside. He then walked on with his load on his back and his horses behind him, and arrived home long before the others. There stood the farmer peering down the road, for he was anxious to know how it would all end, and who would come home first. All at once he caught sight of Olaf with his load on his back, and his horses walking behind, and he was so frightened that he quickly shut the big gate and shot home the bolts. Olaf laid down his load and knocked, but nobody came to open, and so he took the tree-trunks one after the other, and flung them over the wall into the courtyard; then he threw the cart after them, so that the four wheels rolled away in different directions. When the farmer saw this, he thought: "Well, if I do not open the gate, he will throw over the horses in the same way;" and so he unfastened the gate. "Good day, master," said Olaf; and then, after leading the horses into the stable, he went into the kitchen to have a meal. After a while the others came home too with their loads, and Olaf said to them: "Do you remember what we arranged last night? Which of you is to be hanged?" But they said that had only been a joke and did not mean

anything. "Ah well, I don't mind," said Olaf; and that was the end of that day's work.

But the farmer and his wife and the bailiff sat up talking that night about their terrible servant and how they might get rid of him. The bailiff suggested that on the next day, when they were to clean out the deep draw-well, they might manage it; they would try to get Olaf down first and then roll a huge mill-stone on the top of him; that was sure to make an end of him. Then they could simply fill up the well, which would save funeral expenses. The farmer and his wife thought that this was an excellent plan, and they rejoiced in the anticipation of thus getting rid of Olaf once and for all in an easy way.

Olaf, however, had a tougher life than his master thought, and slept very soundly till late into the next day, so that they had to waken him. As usual he rubbed his eyes quite unconcernedly and said: "Oh, yes, it's time to get up and breakfast." He got up, dressed himself and ate a hearty meal, and then asked what he was expected to do that day. When he was told that he would have to clean the well, along with the other men, he went out, and found the others already waiting for him. Olaf told them to choose what they preferred to do: either they might go down into the well and fill the buckets and he would draw them up, or if they liked, he would go down and fill the buckets and they could draw them up. They answered that they preferred to stay above as there was not enough room for them all at the bottom of the well.

Accordingly Olaf went down and began to clean out the well, but the men did as they had arranged beforehand ; each of them brought a stone as large as he could carry, and threw it down on top of Olaf, thinking that that would surely kill him. Olaf, however, did not mind this a bit, but merely cried up to them to drive away the fowls that were scraping sand on his head. Then the other servants saw that these little stones were of no use, and so they armed themselves with poles, ropes, and levers and rolled the big mill-stone to the edge of the well. It took all their strength to throw the huge stone down. Now, they thought, Olaf is surely settled for ever. But the stone fell in such a lucky way that Olaf got his head right through the hole in the middle and it fitted round his neck like a collar. However, Olaf was angry now and would not stay in the well any longer ; he went straight to the farmer and complained that the other men had been trying to make a fool of him ; then lowering his head he shook off the mill-stone so that it fell on the farmer's toes and crushed them flat.

The poor man limped indoors to his wife and then sending for the bailiff told him that he must suggest some way to get rid of that terrible fellow who was playing ducks and drakes with everything ; what they had tried so far had been of no use and they must discover some more successful method. After a while the bailiff said : "I know one more plan that might help us. We will send him out this evening to the devil's pool to fish, and from there he will never come

back alive, for old Eric allows no one to approach him at night-time." The farmer and his wife thought that was really good advice, and then the farmer limped back to Olaf and told him he would punish the men for having played him that mean trick. Meanwhile, however, he would be obliged, if Olaf would do a little job for him where he would be sure that those spiteful fellows could not disturb him. He might row out in the evening to the devil's pool and fish, and in return for that he would have no work to do next day. "Very well," said Olaf, "I am quite agreeable to that, but I must have a good meal to take with me: an oven full of bread, a quarter of a hundredweight of butter, a cask of beer and a gallon of brandy; it must not be any less." His master told him that he would give him that with pleasure, and Olaf had the whole lot packed up, hung it on the end of his stick, slung it over his shoulder and set out to the devil's pool. When he got there he entered the boat, rowed out on the lake, and prepared to fish. When he was right out on the water he thought it would be better to have a meal first, before starting work. He had just begun, when old Eric rose out of the water, seized him by the neck and pulled him to the bottom of the pool. Luckily, Olaf had taken his stick with him, and just before he felt old Eric's claws at his neck, he seized the stick and took it down with him. When they reached the bottom, Olaf said: "Stop a little, we are on solid ground now;" and he seized old Eric by the neck with one hand, while with the other he pummelled him

with his iron stick so hard on the back, that his back soon was as flat as a pancake. Then old Eric began to moan and lament, and begged Olaf to let him go, promising that he would never come near the pool again. "No, my dear friend," said Olaf, "you won't get off, unless you promise to bring all the fish that are in this pool to my master's farm to-morrow morning." Old Eric promised gladly to do this if Olaf would only let him free. Olaf then rowed ashore, ate the rest of his supper, and went home to bed.

Next morning, when the farmer opened the front door, fish began to tumble in until the yard was full of them, and the heap was sky-high. Then he ran in to his wife again and said: "Whatever are we going to do with the fellow? Old Eric has not done him any harm; I am sure there are no fish left in the lake, for the courtyard is covered with them." "That is terrible," she said. "You must persuade him to travel to the infernal regions to collect the interest that is due to us." The farmer now wished to go across to Olaf's bedroom to have a talk with him, but he was obliged to keep close to the wall, because he could hardly get past all the fish that Olaf had procured. Then he told Olaf that he was much obliged to him for his grand catch, and that he now had a task for him, with which he could entrust only a reliable servant. He wished him to go underground to Old Eric's regions and collect the interest that was due to him for three years. "I will do that with pleasure," said Olaf; "but what is the way to the place?"

Then the farmer was at his wits' end, and did not know what to say, so he ran indoors again to ask his wife's advice. "Fool that you are," she said, "tell him to go straight in front of him to the south, through the large forest! Whether he gets there or not does not matter, if only we get rid of him." The farmer went back to Olaf and told him that the way led straight on to the south through the woods. Olaf again demanded enough food to last him for the journey: two ovens full of bread, two quarters of a hundredweight of butter, two barrels of beer and two gallons of brandy. They gave him all that with pleasure; he packed it again in a bundle, flung it on the end of his stick over his shoulder, and then walked away toward the south.

When he came through the wood, he found that there were several roads and he was in doubt which to take, so he sat down and undid his bundle. But, unluckily, he had left his knife at home, and so he picked up a ploughshare that he found in a field and began to cut his bread with it. While he was sitting there a man came riding past. Olaf stopped eating and asked him: "Where are you going?" "To call on old Eric," answered the man. "Then just wait a minute, I have business there too." But the man was in a hurry and would not wait, so Olaf went after him and seized the horse by the tail, so that it stood on its hind legs, and the man flew right into a ditch. "Just wait a minute, I am going the same way," said Olaf. Then he tied up his bundle again and put it on the horse's back, took the horse by the bridle, and said to the man: "Now,

we can both walk." On the way Olaf told the man his business, and also the fun he had had with old Eric; the other man did not say much but he evidently knew the road well, for it was not long before they came to the gate of old Eric's domain. But just as they got there both man and horse vanished and Olaf stood at the gate by himself. "They'll soon come and open it," he thought; but no one came. Then he knocked at the gate, but still no one came, so that he grew tired of waiting and began hammering at the gate with his iron stick, until he had smashed the gate to pieces, and entered. Then a swarm of little imps came rushing at him, and asked him what he wanted. He told them that he was there to present his master's compliments, and to demand the interest due for the last three years. Then they roared at him and began to seize him and drag him to the ground, but when he had given them a few blows with his cudgel, they let him go and roared even louder than before, calling at the same time to old Eric, who, however, was still lying on his bed after the terrible treatment he had received from Olaf at the bottom of the pool. They said there was a farmer's messenger who had come to collect three years interest, and that he had broken the gate with his cudgel and had broken their arms and legs as well.

"Give him the interest for ten years, for all I care," said old Eric, "only do not let him come near me!" Then all the little imps came with so much gold and silver that it was almost terrible to behold. Olaf filled his big bag with it, slung it over his shoulder, and then

walked back to the farm. There they were all exceedingly frightened at the sight of him, but Olaf was tired of his greedy master and would work no longer for him. Therefore he gave him half of the money he had brought with him, and took the other half to his father the blacksmith at Furreby. Then he bade him farewell, also, telling him that he was tired of living on shore and serving human folk; and that he would much rather go back to his mother the Mermaid. And no one ever saw Olaf, the Mermaid's son, again.

The Miserly Squire

UPON a time there lived an old bachelor, named Lars Larsen, who owned a fine estate, but was so miserly that he had never married, thinking a wife would cost him a lot of money. He lived as plainly as possible, and grudged his servants even the food they needed for their sustenance. He was never happy, although he grew richer from year to year, for he was always worried by the thought that too much money was spent in the upkeep of his farm. At last he thought that having a wife might in the end be cheaper, because she could look better than he could after many things, if he could only find one who did not require any food.

One day he discussed the subject with one of his crofters. The latter listened very attentively, and when he reached home said to his daughter Margery : " When you see the squire go past here to-morrow, drive out the geese and say at the same time, ' Go, little geese, for her who eats nothing ! ' Then he will ask you who it is who eats nothing, and you must reply : ' It is I ; my father is a poor man and has many children, so that he cannot give me anything to eat. In our room there stands a wooden post in which my father has bored a few holes, and now and then I go to those holes, open my mouth and draw a mouthful or two of air, and that is what I live on.' "

Things happened just as the crofter had foretold ; next morning Lars Larsen went out into his fields and had

to pass the crofter's house just when Margery was driving out her geese to the pasture. "Go, little geese, for her who eats nothing!" she said. Lars heard these words and asked her: "Who is it that eats nothing?" "Oh, it is I," said Margery, "for my father is a poor man and has many children, so that he cannot give me anything to eat." "On what are you living, then?" asked Lars. "There is a wooden post in our room, in which my father has bored a few holes. I go up to those holes now and then, and draw in a mouthful or two of air, and that is what I live on." "Listen, my good girl," said Lars; "would you like to marry me and become mistress of my large estate?" "Oh, yes!" said Margery. They were soon married, and she went to live at the manor-house. Lars put up a wooden post in the parlour, bored a few holes in it, and told Margery she could go to them and get a few mouthfuls of air whenever she was hungry.

After some time had passed, the squire said to one of his men: "Look here, Niels; I do not really know whether your mistress does eat anything or not, but it seems to me that she is looking very well indeed. Can you tell me how I could find out?" "Well, I do not know," said Niels, "unless I help you to get down the kitchen chimney, and then you might see whether she was having any food in the kitchen." That seemed a good idea, and with the help of Niels the squire went down the chimney and hung there in the smoke among the hams and sausages.

But Niels went to his mistress and said: "Take care

not to eat anything in the kitchen ; your husband is hanging up yonder in the chimney." " That is all right, thank you," said Margery, and then she sent out the kitchenmaid to fetch some damp wood, and put it on the fire, so as to cause a good smoke. When Niels thought that his master had been long enough in the chimney, he helped him down and asked him : " Well, did the mistress eat anything ? " " No," said Lars ; but he was so ill from all the smoke he had swallowed that he could not speak another word and was forced to go to his bed and lie down.

So several more weeks passed, until Lars said one day to his servant : " Look here, Niels ; I am afraid, after all, that our mistress does eat, she is getting so stout. Could you not help me to find out ? " " No, I cannot suggest anything, unless you hide in her bedroom ; there is a big feather-bed there into which you might creep : you could make a little hole to peep through, and then you could find out whether she eats any meals in her bedroom." The squire thought that was a good plan, and he did as Niels advised him. But the servant went downstairs to his mistress and said to her : " Take care not to eat anything to-night in your bedroom, because your husband is going to hide inside the big feather-bed." " Thank you, that will be all right," she said, and then she said to the maidservants : " I think it is time that the feather-beds were cleaned. Carry them outside into the open air and give them a good beating." The servants knew why they were to do that ; they carried the beds outside into the sunshine and gave

them a thorough beating and then carried them back. After a while Niels went upstairs and pulled his master out from the feather-bed; but he was so thoroughly bruised all over that he could neither walk nor crawl. "Well, did the mistress eat anything?" asked Niels. "No, she had no food in her room," said the squire, and crept downstairs to bed, where he lay for a whole week in great pain. But his wife nursed him most tenderly, and said to him several times: "I think, Lars, you are eating too much; you should not eat any more than I do, and then you would always be well and cheerful."

Again several weeks had passed. When Lars had recovered from his beating, he said one day to Niels: "I am sure your mistress does eat something, for it seems to me that she has been growing much stouter lately. Is there no way by which I could find out?" "No," said Niels; "you have seen that she does not eat, either in the kitchen or in her bedroom, and I do not know where else she could eat, unless it were in the cellar. There is an old beer-barrel down there; you might crawl inside and peep through the bunghole, and then you would find out whether she eats anything there." The squire thought it an excellent plan, and crawled into the barrel, while Niels went to his mistress and said: "Mind you do not eat anything downstairs in the cellar, for your husband is hidden in the old beer-barrel." "That will be all right," said the wife, and, calling her maids, she said to them: "There is an old beer-barrel in the cellar that smells very badly.

Niels pulled his master out from the feather bed

Fill the brewing vat with water and bring it to the boil, and then pour the hot water into the barrel so that it may be thoroughly clean!" As the maids loved their mistress, they hastened to do as they were told, and the squire was nearly scalded to death with the hot water. When Niels helped him out, he had to go to bed, and he stayed there a whole month. His wife nursed him and said: "What a pity it is that you so frequently fall ill when you go from home"; for every time when he had hidden himself to watch her he had pretended that he went on a journey.

There were two fat oxen in the squire's stable, and while the husband was ill in bed Margery said to Niels: "You may take the two oxen and sell them at the market, and you may keep the money because you have served me so faithfully." Niels did this, and when the squire got out of bed again, he missed the two oxen, and said to his wife: "What has become of my two oxen?" "I have eaten them," said his wife. "But where are their hides?" "I have eaten those also." "But where are the horns?" "I ate them too." This startled the squire so much that he fell fainting to the ground and had to be put to bed. He never recovered from the shock, and died shortly after. Margery inherited all his money and his large estate; and before long she married her faithful servant Niels, and I believe they are still living, happy and well.

The Roedeer Princess

ONCE upon a time there lived a prince and princess who had loved one another since they were little children, and it had been settled that they were to marry each other when the princess was old enough. At the time my story begins she was only twelve years of age, and she had a step-mother who was a sorceress and hated the little girl. This wicked woman threatened that she would bewitch her step-daughter the very moment she was married, so that she would have to live in the forests and on the moors as a wild roedeer. This made the little princess very sad, for she loved her princely lover dearly and wanted to marry him when the time came. He did not know of the sad fate awaiting her, because she dare not tell him.

One day the princess went out into the woods, where there lived a poor family with whom the princess was acquainted. They had a little girl of her own age, and the princess asked these poor people whether she might take this child home with her to be her waiting-woman ; she only wanted her for a short time on trial, but if she got on well she would keep her always. The parents were very pleased at such an offer, and so was the girl, who accompanied the princess to her castle. The princess kept her for three days, and talked with her all day long, but she warned the girl that she must never repeat to anyone what she had heard and seen in the castle. On the third evening the princess told her

that she could go home and visit her parents and pass the night with them. When she was returned next morning she would be told whether the princess wished to keep her for good. The girl set out on her way home, but the princess followed her and remained standing outside the cottage-window in order to hear whether the girl could keep silence, or whether she was a chatterbox. As soon as the girl entered, the parents asked her all kinds of questions as to what she had seen and heard in the castle, and also what the princess had told her. The girl at once blurted out everything, and told them all they wanted to know. Then the princess went home sadly, for she could not keep such a talkative girl in her castle.

Next day the princess went out again and brought home another little girl, but she could not hold her tongue either and had to leave ; and the same thing happened with several others. At last the princess came upon some very poor folk and she took their daughter home with her. The parents warned their child to behave well and to pay no heed to any gossip ; this the little maiden promised and then accompanied the young princess home. At the end of the third day the princess allowed her to go home to stay with her parents until the next day, she herself following as usual, in order to hear what she would say. When the little girl entered the cottage her parents asked her whether she had behaved well and she answered that she thought she had done so. They begged her always to be faithful and willing, and then the princess would keep her for good

and treat her well. After that they said their evening prayers and went to bed.

The princess, however, went home, and so pleased was she with what she had heard, that when the girl returned next morning, the princess told her that she would willingly keep her as a companion. The poor girl was now brought up in the castle and learned all her lessons with the princess, and the two became great friends. In time she grew up to be very handsome, and resembled the princess so much that the two were often mistaken for each other ; especially as they always dressed alike.

When the time came for the princess and the prince to be married, she told her friend what was going to happen to her. She arranged that her companion should keep close beside her and slip into her place at the moment when the bride herself would be changed into a roedeer. She hoped that thus her lover would not know the difference, and would so be spared this great grief. The girl loved her mistress dearly and devotedly, and asked her whether it might not be possible to save her from this great misfortune. "Can I not be changed into a roedeer," she asked, "instead of you ?" "No," said the princess, "that cannot be done ; but every Christmas-eve, for the next three years, you may meet me out yonder in the arbour among the trees. I shall then assume human form for one hour, and we can at least talk with each other during that time."

The wedding-day arrived and the marriage was duly celebrated. The threat of the wicked step-mother was

As the roe rushed past him he stabbed it

also carried out: at the very moment the ceremony was over, the princess was transformed into a roedeer and ran out into the woods. But her friend had been watching, and she took her place by the prince's side without the latter noticing the change. He thought that the girl was the princess, and when she begged him to let her live in a separate establishment for three years—her play-year, her maiden-year, and her spinning-year—he could not refuse her. A short time afterward the king died, and the daughter of the poor folk became queen of the country.

When the first Christmas-eve came, the supposed queen went out to the arbour in the woods to meet the rightful queen and to chat with her. She did the same the following year, but there were people who noticed this, and they began to gossip about the queen stealing out of the castle every Christmas-eve, declaring that there must be something wrong. The king heard of it, and when the third Christmas-eve came, he kept awake, although he pretended to be asleep, and when the queen left him, he followed her secretly to the arbour, where she had met the rightful queen and was talking to her.

Then he heard the real queen ask: "How go matters between you and the king?" And she, whom he thought to be his wife, answered: "Very well. We live like brother and sister; but is there no means at all of saving you?" "No," was the reply; "this is the last evening on which I am allowed to appear in human form. There is only one way to save me, and

that is for a pure and innocent prince to wound me with his sword so that my blood is shed ; but he must do it unasked."

At that moment she turned again into a roedeer and ran out of the arbour. But the king had drawn his sword, and as the roe rushed past him he stabbed it, so that the blood began to flow. All at once the roe was changed into a princess, more beautiful than had ever lived before, and now they went home together and lived happily together as king and queen. Many little princes and princesses were born to them, and their faithful friend stayed with them all her life, and everybody loved her very dearly.

Prince Irregang and Maid Miseri

ALONG, long time ago there lived a king who used to go hunting with his knights and squires.

They hunted the stag, they hunted the hare
Through forest and meadow and everywhere.

One day when they had been out hunting as usual, the king happened to be riding a very swift horse, and so it came about that he was far ahead of his followers in the wood. When it grew dark, and a thick mist came down over all the woods and meadows, the king lost his way completely. He could find neither road nor foot-path, and, before he noticed, he found himself right in the middle of a large bog. His horse sank down at every step, now with its hind legs, now with its fore-legs, and at last it stumbled so far into the bog that it could not get out at all, but was swallowed up entirely. The king managed to leap down just in time to save his life. He scrambled from one stone to another, but repeatedly sank down and had hard work to get out again ; it seemed as if the bog would never come to an end. The king thought he must perish in that terrible quagmire for he soon became thoroughly exhausted. Then, all at once, he beheld a little man with a long beard coming across the bog with a stick in his hand ; it looked as though he were walking on solid ground,

and yet he was going right across the holes and pools. "Hallo," cried the king, "come and help me out of this bog!" "Well, you are in a fine fix, king," said the man, "and you will never get out alive unless I help you. But I will not do that unless you promise me that the first male being born in the castle after your safe return shall be mine. Do you promise that?" The king would have promised anything to get out of the danger he was in, and said: "I promise it faithfully, if you will help me to reach dry ground!" "There is my stick," said the old man, "just follow it; it will show you the right way out." Saying this, he threw his stick at the king, and although the king did not catch it that did not matter, because the stick jumped from stone to stone, and all he had to do was to follow it. Soon he found dry, firm ground under his feet, but the stick continued to leap further and further until the king saw his castle right in front of him. Then, after turning a somersault in the air, the stick trotted off in the same way that it had come.

When the king was safely out of the bog he thought over what he had promised, but, as there were so many living creatures of all kinds in the castle, it was difficult to foretell what might be the first male creature born; it might be a foal, a puppy, a pig, a lamb, a goat or a kitten. Of course, it might be a baby boy, and even the king's own child. But the king's child might be a girl, and then it would not matter. However, just as the king was going upstairs he heard that a son was born to him. This young prince was his first-born child, and alas!

the first male being that had seen the light of day after the king's return. Thus there was no doubt but that the monarch would be obliged to give this son to the old sorcerer who had saved his life. The king told the queen all that had happened, and they agreed that they must find some way of satisfying the sorcerer, whatever it might cost. They surely would not have to give him their first-born boy!

The boy was christened and named Irregang. When he was a fortnight old, the queen was sitting one evening alone beside his cradle, when the old sorcerer suddenly stood before her and asked her whether she knew that the boy belonged to him. She said she did, but offered him all sorts of valuable things instead. It was no good: the only concession he was willing to make was that she might keep her boy for five years, if she would give him a hundred oxen. The queen gladly gave him the oxen, and nothing more was seen of the sorcerer until five years had passed; then he came again, and permitted the queen to keep the child another five years. In exchange for this, he was given two hundred oxen, and when the boy was ten years old he allowed his mother to keep him for another five years, and this time he received three hundred oxen.

Thus Prince Irregang grew up in his father's castle until he was fifteen years of age; he was a handsome, well-behaved boy, well-trained both in body and mind. One evening the old sorcerer again stepped before the queen, his stick in his hand, and said: "I have come this time to fetch my boy." She begged and implored,

offering him all she possessed to be allowed to keep the boy another five years, but her prayers and tears availed her nothing ; the sorcerer said that the time had come when he must claim what was his own. "He must come to me to-morrow," he commanded. "I shall leave my stick standing at the castle gate ; it will show him the right way. If he does not come, I shall bury your castle, with every living being in it, so deep in the earth that fifty-seven fathoms of water cover it. It is fifteen years since I saved the king's life, and a king must not break his promise."

The wicked old man went away leaving his stick behind, and the king and queen were very sad indeed. Early next morning they bade their son a tearful good-bye, and gave him the sorcerer's stick. Scarcely was Irregang outside the castle when the stick darted between his legs, and he did not know whether he was riding or flying, so quickly was he carried away over hill and dale, over land and water, until it was evening. Then he felt firm ground under his feet again, and found himself with stick in hand in front of a castle that looked as if it had been hollowed out of a mountain. There stood the little old man with the long beard, ready to receive him. Irregang knew at once who it was, and said : "Good evening, sorcerer !" "Good evening, prince," replied the old man ; "but I am called king and master here, and not sorcerer. I feel greatly inclined to punish you severely for the impudent way in which you have addressed me, and I shall do so at once if you cannot tell me three things in which I can find

no untruth." "Very well," said the prince, "that is soon done. Never did I sleep softer than in my mother's lap; never did I taste anything sweeter than my mother's milk; and never have I caused my mother greater grief than to-day."

There was not a vestige of untruth in all that, therefore the sorcerer was quite pleased with Irregang, and said that he could see that he had been well taught. "But there is still a great deal you can learn from me," he said, "and you will need to be very industrious. To-night you shall have a holiday; you can walk about and have a good look round; but to-morrow your work will commence."

In the sorcerer's castle there were indeed many things such as Irregang had never seen before. Everywhere there was a glitter of gold and silver, but to that he was accustomed. However, he also saw many strange things the meaning of which he did not understand, and there were strange birds and flowers and trees, quite different from anything he had ever seen before. Inside the castle there were a great many people besides the sorcerer—his twelve servants, all rough, fierce-looking men; and the sorcerer's old mother, who lived in the upper story. A more vicious old witch there never was. She had two big black teeth—the only teeth she had—protruding far out of her mouth, and a nose so crooked and long that it hung down over her chin: she was terrible to look upon. For servant, she had a pretty little girl, who was not at all like her; this servant was called Maid Miseri. She did not belong to the sorcerer's

family, but was a real princess whom he had stolen when she was almost a baby. She had lived a long time with the old witch and had learnt all her tricks, as she was a very clever little girl, but at the same time she was a good child. She watched Irregang closely when he came to the castle, and soon liked him much better than she did the family and servants of the sorcerer, among whom she was compelled to live; but she was careful not to show her liking for him. The prince meanwhile got a good supper and a comfortable bed, and slept soundly till the next morning. Then the sorcerer called him, and took him into a large forest. He was to cut down all the trees in the forest, the sorcerer told him. That was to be his day's work. "And if you do not finish it before evening," said the old man severely, "I shall twist your neck." Saying this, he went away, and the boy stood all alone in the forest with his axe, which was so heavy that he could hardly carry it. He began to strike at the root of a tree, lifting the axe as high as he could; but although a few chips fell off, that was of little use. However hard he worked, he felt he could not fell even a single tree before evening. So he sat down, wiped the sweat from his brow, and made up his mind that his last hour had come. Then he saw Maid Miseri tripping along with a basket, in which she brought him his mid-day meal. She asked him why he looked so sad, and he told her that he had given up all hope, as he had been ordered to cut down the whole forest before evening, and he could not manage to fell even a single tree.

Maid Miseri told him that there was no reason for despair, as such a little bit of wood could be cut down easily.

"Will you help me?" Irregang asked her. "If I help you, you will not be faithful to me," said the maid. "Yes," he assured her, "if you help me, I will be faithful to you for ever." Then Maid Miseri bade him sit down and eat his dinner; afterward she said, they would make short work of the forest. She sat down beside him and chatted with him, and soon they began to like one another very much.

When it was near evening the girl said that she ought to go home now, because the old witch would soon awake from her afternoon sleep, and it was her daily duty to sit beside her and stroke her hair when she was sleeping. "But I shall let our black cat do it to-day," she explained, "and when I go home, I shall feed it with cream and then it will not betray me. But now let us fell the trees." She then lifted her apron in the air, waved it about and said: "Sh! Sh! Sh!" Down fell the whole forest, one tree beside another; it was quickly done. Then Maid Miseri picked up her basket and ran home to the old witch, whom luckily she found still fast asleep.

When the sun had set, the sorcerer came out to see how much Irregang had done, and he was astonished to find the whole forest cut down. "You can do more than I thought," he said, "but I am sure you did not do it without help." Then Irregang returned to the sorcerer's castle, received his supper and went to bed.

Next morning he was taken to a sheep-fold, and was told that he must clean it out before evening, or else he would have his neck twisted. And there Irregang stood alone in the fold, which was as large as a big barn, and the old litter covered the whole fold from floor to ceiling. He found a spade so heavy that he could hardly lift it, and began to tackle the work, but he saw little improvement when dinner-time came. Then Maid Miseri arrived with his dinner, and he told her of his new trouble. Again she said: "If I help you, you will not be faithful to me." But again he assured her that he would be true and faithful to her as pure gold. "Very well," she said, "then I will help you. Besides, this sheep-fold has not been cleaned out for a hundred years, so that the sorcerer has given you a hard task to perform." Then she struck the spade and said:

"*Quick, O spade, perform the task,*
Which royal children from thee ask."

Then the spade began to throw out the refuse so that it flew over their heads. "Do not let us stay here," said the maid. She took Irregang by the hand and led him into the sorcerer's garden, where she gave him beautiful ripe fruit to eat. They stayed here a long time, chatting with each other, until toward evening Maid Miseri bade him farewell, as she had to be home before the old witch woke up. Irregang, however, went back into the fold in case the sorcerer might catch him, and when he got there he found it as clean as a freshly scrubbed room. Soon after, the

sorcerer arrived and said to Irregang : " Well, you are not so stupid as most human beings. But I am sure some one has helped you." Then Irregang was allowed to go home, eat his supper and go to bed.
Next morning the sorcerer said to Irregang : " You have had two days' hard work, so this morning I shall give you an easy task. All you need do is to ride my stallion to the horse-pond ; that is a thing to which you are accustomed." The boy went into the stable, where he found many horses, but none could be compared with the sorcerer's favourite stallion, a big grey horse, standing by himself in the furthest stall. He stood by a golden manger, but there was no fodder in it ; and although he was tied with an iron bridle, he was stamping wildly on the stone-flags, so that sparks were flying. The moment Irregang came near him, he put back his ears, and snorted so that fire flashed from his nostrils. The prince had had plenty of practice with restive horses, but he had never seen one like this ; he whistled and coaxed, but the stallion remained as wild as ever, and was ready to bite and kick most viciously. When dinner-time came, Irregang was still standing at the door of the stable without having proceeded any further with his task, and he was glad when he saw Maid Miseri coming with his dinner. " Oh, that is the worst task they have ever given you," she said, " but I think I can help you." The prince begged her very earnestly to do so, and she promised that she would, if he would remain faithful to her. He told her again that he would be true and faithful to her for ever,

because he had never loved anyone so dearly as he loved her. Then the maid took a wisp of straw, laid it on the stallion's back, and said :

" *O stallion, if quite still you stand,*
Much hay and oats you'll then command !"

The horse at once stood as still as a lamb, and the maid went up to him and gave him some of the best fodder that was in the stable ; then she breathed seven times on the padlocks with which he was fastened to the manger, and they fell off, whereupon she said :

" *Ride on, good horse, for heaven's reward.*
You carry a prince ; be on your guard !"

Irregang leaped on the stallion's back, rode him to the horse-pond and back again to his manger. There the maid breathed again on the seven padlocks and they at once closed themselves, and everything was as before. As soon as this was finished the maid hurried back to the old witch, and a few moments afterward the sorcerer stepped into the stable and said to the prince : " Well, I see you have done what I told you ; you may go in now and take your supper."

But the sorcerer went upstairs to his mother to have a private talk with her, and Maid Miseri listened at the door. She heard the sorcerer say : " Maid Miseri has grown too clever for us. I am sure she is in league with that boy, or he could never have accomplished what he has done. We must get rid of them both, and

the best way will be to have them for our dinner ; royal children taste particularly good. I will heat the oven, and when that is done they shall be put in and roasted." The old sorceress smacked her lips in anticipation of that toothsome meal. " See that you cook them until they are nice and tender ! " she added. The sorcerer promised to attend to that. Then he went outside and told Irregang that it was baking day, and that he must fetch wood for the oven. To Maid Miseri he said that she was to make a good fire ; he himself was going to rest, but she was to come and tell him when the oven was hot enough.

Now, Irregang fetched wood, and Maid Miseri went on heating the oven until she heard the sorcerer snore, and knew that he was fast asleep. Then she took two large logs of wood, placed them upright, one on each side of the oven, whispered a few words to each of the logs, and, taking Irregang by the hand, dragged him close to the oven.

" Now, you are going to be roasted, prince ! " she said. " The oven is ready."

" Oh, help me ! " he begged. " If I help you, you will not be faithful to me," she said, as before. But again he vowed that he would for ever be true and faithful to her, that she was very dear to him, and that he would marry her. Then Miseri quickly ran into the stable, whispered to the sorcerer's stallion, and released him from the manger. Then both she and Irregang leaped on his back and rode away as fast as the stallion could carry them.

Meanwhile the sorcerer awoke from his sleep and shouted: "Is the oven hot enough, Maid Miseri?" "No, not yet," was the answer; it came from one of the logs, but it sounded just like Miseri's voice. "Then put on more wood!" shouted the sorcerer, and continued to sleep. After a while he awoke again and shouted: "Is the oven not hot enough yet?" "No, not yet," came the answer from the other log, and this time it sounded like Irregang's voice. "Surely it must soon be hot enough," said the sorcerer, and went to sleep again. When he woke up for the third time, and again asked whether the oven was not yet hot enough, nobody answered him, so he got up quickly and ran out to the oven but found it as cold as ice. Then he ran about here and there, but no prince and no maid could he find, and when he came to the stable he discovered that his stallion had disappeared also. Then he shouted and roared so that the whole castle shook, and every one came rushing out, his old mother as well as his twelve servants. There was no doubt about it; the two royal children had disappeared by means of the stallion, and the twelve men were sent out to fetch them back.

The prince and the maid were by this time some considerable distance from the sorcerer's castle, but now the horse stopped and said: "My leg is hurting." "That is a sign that we are pursued," said the maid; "turn round, prince, and tell me what you see." "I see a swarm of crows flying after us," he answered. "Those are the twelve servants of the sorcerer; they

are sent to catch us," remarked the maid, "let us get the better of them," and she said :

"*Now let me be a rosebud quick,*
Be thou a bush, and the horse a stick."

Thus the prince was changed into a thorn-bush, and Miseri grew as a rosebud on it, while the horse was transformed into a stick by the road-side. The crows came along, and although they saw the rose-bush and the stick by the road-side, they flew on. At last they turned back and reported to the sorcerer that they had seen nothing, except a wild rose-bush with a rose on it and a stick lying beside it. "Stupid creatures that you are!" shouted the sorcerer, "those were the three of them. You should have plucked the rose, and the others would have come too. I will go myself and bring them back." He then took his stick between his legs and flew away through the air like a whirlwind. The fugitives had meanwhile ridden a good distance farther, when the horse spoke again and said : "My leg is hurting." "Then we are again pursued," said the maid ; "Look around, prince ; do you see anything ?" "I see a fiery wheel in the air," he replied. "Oh, that is the king of the sorcerers himself," said the maid ; what can we do now ?" "Oh, do help me once more," said the prince. "If I help you, will you be faithful to me ?" asked the maid ; "I will trust you and try what I can do." Then she said :

"*Be thou a church, I'll be a priest,*
Into a churchyard we'll change our beast."

Then the horse became a churchyard, the prince a church beside it ; and Maid Miseri a priest standing at the altar. When the sorcerer came near, he thought he had not seen that church before, so he swooped down and looked in through the open door, but when he saw the priest and heard him reading Mass, he drew back quickly and flew home to his old mother, the witch.

"Well," she asked, "did you not see anything of the two?" "No," answered the sorcerer, "I came to a Christian country and saw a church with a priest in it, but I did not see the two children." "Oh, you are hopelessly dense," said the old witch, "those were the two. You should have taken the priest by the neck, and then church and churchyard would have followed you. I suppose I shall have to find them myself!" Seizing a pitchfork, she rode on it through the air at such a speed that everything crackled and sparkled behind her.

Meanwhile the fugitives had travelled much farther, when the horse said again, "My leg is hurting." "Look behind you, prince. What do you see?" said the maid. "I see a fiery dragon in the air," he answered. "Oh, that is the sorcerer's mother," said Maid Miseri, "she is our worst danger"; and at the same moment she said :

"*I'll be a duck, a duckling you,*
And the horse a brooklet for us two!"

And there they were swimming about in the clear

water. Just then the old witch arrived and swooped down to the water's edge. "Duckie, duckie! Come to me, dearie!" she said as coaxingly as she could. She tried to entice the duck to her by throwing grains of corn into the water, but the duck swam away and the duckling followed. Then the witch threw her witch's apple into the brook; there was a long thread attached to it, so that, if she had caught either of the two, she would have been able to pull them ashore. But the duck seized the duckling by the wing and dived with it deep under the water, while at the same moment she bit the thread in two, so that the apple sank to the bottom, and with it vanished all the witchcraft of the old sorceress. Now she had no more power over the two children, and she became so enraged that her body burst into little pieces of flint and covered a whole field with the splinters. But Maid Miseri and Irregang assumed their former shapes, as did also the sorcerer's stallion, and they rode peacefully along until they came to the country and the castle where Irregang's father lived.

When they were quite close to the castle, the maid changed the stallion into a big stone. The two sat down on it, and Miseri stroked the stone as she said: "You must not think, Prince Irregang, that it is only a few days since you left home; more than seven years have passed since then, and it is much, much longer since I left home, and very few of my relations and friends are likely to be living now." She went on stroking the stone with her hand, as she continued:

"But in your home also much has changed. Your mother is dead, but your father is still alive; he is married again, to the widow of a king. She has a grown-up daughter, and there is also a baby prince at the castle. Go in and tell your father everything, and when you have done that you can come out again and fetch me. But you must be very careful that nobody kisses you before you fetch me, because if that happens you will forget me entirely." He thought that that was an easy promise to make; he was so happy and grateful, and loved the maid so dearly. He therefore kissed her on her red lips and went into his father's castle, but the maid remained sitting on the large stone.

When Irregang came to his father, the latter recognized him at once, and was greatly delighted at seeing him again; and when the new queen, Irregang's step-mother, entered with her little boy in her arms, and learnt who Irregang was, she wanted to offer him a kiss for welcome. But Irregang drew back, and when the queen held his little step-brother up to be kissed, Irregang merely stroked his cheeks. Then a greyhound came rushing in, and Irregang, thinking he recognized his own old dog, stroked him and called him by his name, so that the dog sprang up to his shoulders and licked his face. As soon as this had happened, Irregang entirely forgot Maid Miseri and his love for her; he could not remember her name, nor any of the many things she had done for him. When he was asked to relate all that had happened to him during the last seven years, which had seemed to him like so many days, Irregang

could give no account of it; his memory was entirely gone. The king begged him not to torment himself, but to put the whole matter out of his mind; they knew that he had been bewitched, but now that he was at home again among his own people, it did not matter. The king and his queen gave a great ball that evening to celebrate the prince's return, and there he met the queen's beautiful daughter and fell deeply in love with her. Song and dance and gaiety filled the castle, and Irregang danced all night with the beautiful princess, while his real sweetheart, poor Maid Miseri, sat alone and forgotten on the stone by the wayside.

When she had sat there long enough to know what must have happened inside the castle, she rose and transformed the stone into a little grey calf. She went with it to the king's farm, which was at some distance from the castle, and told the people that she was a poor girl who had neither father nor mother, and possessed nothing but her little grey calf. When she asked them whether they could not give her some work at the farm, they told her that she might be the poultry-maid, and look after the king's poultry. They gave her a little cottage where she could live and keep her little grey calf as company and there she stayed. Of Prince Irregang she saw nothing, and he never thought of her, in fact, he had become betrothed to the queen's beautiful daughter the very evening of his return to the castle, and the marriage was to take place very soon.

All the people in the castle talked a good deal about

the new poultry-maid, because she was so very beautiful and so skilful with her hands. Nobody could stitch a seam as neatly as she could, and as everybody was getting new clothes for the prince's wedding, the king's coachman decided to ask her to sew him a new lace-shirt to wear with his state coat. So he went one evening and asked her if she would do that for him; adding that he was willing to pay her handsomely for it. She consented willingly to do so, and told him to wait, as the shirt would be ready in a few moments, and he could take it home with him. Then she said:

"*Scissors, come and cut, needle, come and stitch!*
You must do this work, quick as did the witch."

The work commenced at once, while the coachman sat telling her of all the great doings and splendour in connexion with the prince's wedding. When the shirt was finished, however, he showed no sign of leaving but began to talk of love, and asked Miseri to be his sweetheart. Then she said, "Please do me a favour first! I have forgotten to put out my fire, go outside and cover it with ashes. You will find a shovel beside the hearth; take that, but call to me when you have found it." He was very pleased to do her a little service and went outside, and when he had the shovel in his hand, he called out to her that he had found it. She immediately said:

"*Shovel, come and hold this wight*
Till the cock-crow brings daylight!"

Then she went to bed and fell asleep, but the coachman could neither let go the shovel nor stir from the spot; he was compelled to stand there all night stirring the fire with the shovel until he was smothered with the ashes. Only in the morning, when the cock crowed, was the spell broken, and he hastened back to the castle.

In the course of the day he boasted to the other servants about the beautiful shirt that the pretty poultry-maid had made for him, and he showed it to them, but he said nothing of his night's adventure. The prince's valet wished to get as fine a shirt for himself, and the same evening he went to the pretty poultry-maid with a request that she would make one for him. She told him, as she had told the coachman, that that was an easy matter; if he cared to wait, he could take the shirt with him by bedtime. Then as before:

"*Scissors, come and cut, needle, come and stitch,*
You must do this work, quick as did the witch."

The valet also had much to tell her about the great people at the castle, and when the shirt was finished he did not stir, but began to make pretty speeches to the maid. Then she said to him: "Oh, I have forgotten to fasten the bolt of my woodshed door; would you mind doing it for me? The bolt hangs at the doorpost by a bit of string; tell me when you have found it." He was very willing to oblige her, and called

to her when he had picked up the bolt. She said immediately :

" *Bolt, dear bolt, hold fast this wight,*
Until at cock-crow comes daylight !"

And then she went to bed as if nothing had happened. But the forward fellow had to stand outside the whole night, trying to fasten the bolt ; and so hard did he try that, next morning, when he slunk home, the door was full of holes.

But the stupid valet could not hold his tongue either, and boasted about the fine shirt that the beautiful maid had sewn for him, so that the king's groom thought he also would like to have one. In the evening he went to the little house of the poultry-maid and asked her whether she would be so kind as to make him a fine shirt, so that he could wear it at the wedding. Of course, she agreed to do so, and told him to wait. Again she said :

" *Scissors, come and cut, needle, come and stitch !*
You must do this work, quick as did the witch."

While the stitching went on, the groom sat talking and made himself as pleasant as he could. When it was bedtime, and the shirt was finished, he would not go, but made himself more agreeable than before, so the maid said : " Oh, dear me, how annoying ! I have forgotten something very important ; I must go and do it now." The groom asked what it was, and whether he could do it for her, but she said that she could not ask such

a fine gentleman to do such menial work. She had forgotten to put her calf into the stable. The groom rose at once and offered to do it, saying he would not allow her to go. "But the little animal is very stubborn; you will not get it inside unless you pull it by the tail." He ran out, and she called after him to let her know when he had hold of the tail. The groom found the little calf, seized it by the tail, and called to the maid to tell her so. Then she said:

"*Calf, dear calf, do hold the wight,*
Till crow of cock doth bring daylight!"

The calf would not let itself be put into the stable, but ran off; and as the groom could not let go of the tail, he had to follow the animal over ditches and hedges, through pools and bogs, the whole night long, so that his limbs were all scratched and bruised when the calf at last returned to its stable in the morning, and let him go. He limped back home as well as he could and went straight to bed, but he forgot all about his fine shirt!

That was a doubly sad adventure for the poor groom, because it was the very day of the royal wedding, and the poor fellow was obliged to get up and dress himself and look after the king's horses; he had even to mount a horse and ride in front of the king's carriage on the way to church, although his limbs ached terribly.

Altogether it turned out a most disastrous day, and it seemed as if they would never reach the church. Scarcely had the carriage with the bridal couple left

the castle when one of the carriage poles broke, and another had to be secured, but this broke also. Then the coachman said that close by lived a poultry-maid who had a very strong shovel that they might use; he was sure it would do. A messenger was accordingly sent to the maid's cottage to tell her that the royal party required her shovel, but she answered: "My mother never took orders from a servant, and I, her daughter, will not do so either." The bridegroom had therefore to go himself and ask her politely for the loan of her shovel, which she gave him; it was put in the place of the broken pole and fastened firmly with ropes, and they drove on. They had only travelled a few yards when one of the bolts that held the pole broke in two, and every new bolt that was put in broke also. Now the king's valet remembered the bolt with which the poultry-maid had asked him to fasten the door of her woodshed, and he told the king about it, adding that he was sure that it would be strong enough. He was sent to fetch it, but the maid, as before, would not lend the bolt until the prince came to ask for it, and he had to fetch it himself. The bolt fitted perfectly, and the carriage drove on, but just as it came in front of the poultry-maid's cottage the wheels stuck in a rut so firmly that its six horses could not move it from the spot. Six more horses were put on, yet the carriage would not move. At this point the groom told his master that the poultry-maid possessed a calf which was extraordinarily strong, and he was certain that it would be able to draw the carriage out of the rut.

Accordingly, the bridegroom entered the cottage and begged the maid to lend him her calf.

"How could my little calf draw a load that twelve horses cannot move?" asked the maid; but all the same she told them that they might try it. The horses were unyoked and the calf harnessed to the carriage. As soon as it began to pull, the carriage sped along so fast that the spokes in the wheels could not be seen; the wheels looked just like revolving rings, and so they went at full gallop right up to the church. The church was situated on the top of a steep hill, and the intention had been that every one should get out at the foot of the hill and walk up to the porch, for which purpose the road had been covered with beautiful carpets, but the calf drew the carriage right across them all and stopped just in front of the church.

The bridal couple descended from their carriage, but they were quite upset by the mad drive up the hill; they waited till the whole procession was together before entering the church, where the priest and sacrist were waiting. After the marriage ceremony was over, they returned to the castle where the marriage feast was to take place, and although they had six horses to their carriage, the drive was not nearly such a fast one as when the calf had drawn them. The bridegroom said that it was only right that the poultry-maid should be asked to the feast, as they owed so much to her kind help. An invitation was therefore sent to her and she appeared just at the moment when the guests were going to sit down to dinner. No one knew her,

however, for nobody suspected that the beautiful young lady who was dressed like a princess and who bore herself like a queen, could be the poultry-maid. She was far more beautiful than all the other ladies not even excepting the bride. She took her seat right in the middle of the guests, opposite the bridle couple, and on each of her shoulders sat a pigeon.

When all the guests had taken their seats, the poultry-maid threw three grains of barley on the table, whereupon the pigeons flew down to them. The larger bird picked up two grains, leaving only one for his mate. Then the girl said :

"*Faithless to give your mate but one,*
As to Miseri the prince has done !"

All the guests stared at her in amazement, but the bridegroom looked at her more closely than anyone ; he felt that surely he knew the maid, whose name seemed to be quite familiar. Then she scattered six grains of barley on the table, and the pigeons again flew down to them, the one pigeon picking up four and leaving only two for his mate. The maid now said reproachfully:

"*Faithless to give your mate but two,*
As to Miseri the prince did do.
He set her on a wayside stone,
And sorrow sat with her alone."

Then the pigeons flew up again and rested on her shoulders, but Prince Irregang sprang from his seat ;

The calf stopped just in front of the church

now he remembered everything and recognized the maid. And this is what he said to his astonished guests:

"Once upon a time I had a beautiful casket made to hold all my most valuable belongings, and a precious golden key was made to fit it. It happened, however, that I lost the golden key and received a silver one instead. Now I have found the golden key again, and I ask you all which key you advise me to use: the golden key or the silver?" Then the guests answered with one voice that he should use the golden key. "As you all give me this advice," continued Prince Irregang, "it cannot offend you if I set aside the marriage you have just witnessed, and wed instead the princess who sits opposite me with the pigeons on her shoulders. She alone is my real sweetheart, to whom I owe everything, although all memory of her left me the very day I came back to this house."

Now he remembered everything that had happened to him and related it from beginning to end. When he came to the incident of so suddenly losing his memory when he entered his father's castle, the maid interrupted him and said: "Do you not remember that I warned you not to let yourself be kissed by anyone before you had presented me to your father? You did not kiss your step-mother when she wanted to kiss you, nor her little son, your step-brother, but you allowed what you thought was your greyhound to kiss you. That greyhound was no other than the princess, who to-day played the part of bride at your wedding."

Everybody now understood that the queen was in reality a witch, and that her daughter had laid a trap to ensnare the prince. The king was so angry that he caused the queen, with her daughter and her little son, to be put into a carriage and sent back to the country from which they had come; and after this was celebrated the marriage between Prince Irregang and Maid Miseri.

At night, before retiring to rest, Maid Miseri said to her bridegroom: "Will you please do me a favour now? Send some one to fetch the grey calf that is at home in my little cottage. It is none other than the good stallion who carried us to your father's castle. Put it in one of the guest-rooms, and tell your valet to place one of your own suits of clothes beside it." When this had been done, she turned to her bridegroom and said: "Now you are mine, and I shall be yours, and will keep nothing for myself. Nevertheless, I still possess the knowledge of the witchcraft that I learned in the sorcerer's castle, and that I wish to cast away from me." She explained to him how that was to be done; a large bath, full of cold water, must be put beside her bed, and when she was about to get into bed, he was to seize her and throw her backward into the water, so that she was quite covered by it. Then when he lifted her out again all her witchcraft would be forgotten and she would never remember any of it.

He did what she asked him to do, and next morning the happy couple went into the room where the calf had been put the night before. But now before them stood a prince, who looked as much like Maid Miseri

as if the two were brother and sister. And, indeed, he was her brother, whom the old sorcerer had bewitched, and who could only assume human shape again when there was no longer a Maid Miseri. As she was now the wife of the prince, the spell was broken. The marriage festivities lasted eight days, and then the bride's brother set out for home and took over the government of his father's kingdom ; but Irregang became king in his own country, as his father resigned the crown. And this is the story of King Irregang and Queen Miseri.

The Three Red Piggies

IN the long ago there was an old woman who dwelt in a little hut, and whose whole wealth consisted of one cow. With her lived her grandson, and he was a quaint fellow, full of funny ideas. Now it came to pass that the old woman was in such great trouble because of her poverty that she told the boy to take the cow to market and sell it there. He set out with the cow, but, before he came to the market town, he met an old woman, who walked along beside him and asked him all sorts of questions. At last she said: "I like you, my boy, and I will offer you a piece of good advice: Let me have your cow! To be sure, I have no money, but I will give you something that is much better than money." Then she showed the boy what she was carrying in her apron—three tiny little pigs. They were very pretty, for their skins were bright red, and they had little curly tails. When she put them down and, drawing forth a flute, began to play, the pigs began to dance and wag their little tails, so that it was a pleasure to look at them.

"Now, my boy," she said, "I will give you these, together with the flute, in exchange for your old cow. That is surely a good bargain, and ought to please you." The lad thought so too, and accepted her offer. He took off his coat and wrapped the little pigs in it, because it would have been a shame to make them walk the whole way home; but the flute he put inside his

cap. He ran home as fast as he could, and, with great glee, showed his grandmother what he had brought back in exchange for the cow.

But the poor old woman began to weep and lament, and even the dancing of the little pigs could not console her. She told the boy that he was mad and was ruining her, but he told her to cheer up, for it was a very good bargain that he had made.

Quite close to the old woman's cottage lived a rich nobleman with his wife, and they had an only child, a very pretty girl. She was of the same age as the boy, about fifteen years old, but she was an exceedingly proud young lady. As the boy knew that her parents were from home and that she was alone, he took his little pigs, went in front of her windows, played on his flute and let the pigs dance. The young lady came to the castle wall and looked on, and as she liked the clever pigs, she came outside and offered to buy one of them. However, the lad would not give her one for money, but he said that if she would allow him to stroke her cheek, and if she would give him some food for his old grandmother, he would willingly let her have a little pig.

The boy's clothes were very ragged and his hands not particularly clean, so the young lady did not care to have her cheek stroked by him, but she was so eager to have one of the pigs, that she allowed him to do as he requested, and she also gave him a large basket of food. He came home very proudly and told his grandmother what he had received for one pig, but she did not seem

at all pleased. That was all very well, she said, but what would they live on when the food was eaten? "Never mind that," said the boy, "I will take care of the future."

Next day he took the two remaining pigs, went again to the window of the mansion and played on his flute, and his pigs danced even more beautifully than the day before. The young lady came out to look at the dancing. She had not been able to make her pig dance at all, and she thought it would behave better if she could buy another as a companion for it. She asked the boy if he would sell her another, and he replied that he would willingly give her another, if she would allow him to kiss her.

Now, although he was a pretty enough boy if only he had been cleaner, he had just been eating some bread and treacle, and his mouth was very sticky, but the young lady was so eager to have the second pig, that she consented. Then he gave her a sounding kiss right on her ruddy lips, and was sent home with another basket of food. Proudly he told his grandmother what he had got for his second pig, and when she grumbled again, because they would have nothing to eat when this supply was gone, he told her, as before, not to trouble, for he would take care of the future.

On the morning of the third day, he went again before the young lady's window with his remaining pig; he played on his flute and the pig danced and leapt around him more merrily than ever. The little lady came out again and looked on; she was very sad because she had

The young lady came to the castle wall and looked on

not been able to make her two pigs dance. Now she wanted the third one and also the flute, because she could see quite well that it was the magic of the flute that made the pigs dance. She therefore asked the boy if he would sell her the third pig and the flute with it. "Oh, yes," said the boy, "I will gladly give them to you, if you will lay your head in my lap."

The boy's clothes were ragged and dirty, and the young lady did not want her beautiful black hair to be soiled, but if she was to have her wish gratified she must do what the boy asked, and she therefore laid her head in his lap. He stroked her black silken hair with his fingers, and in doing so he noticed three strange hairs among the others : one was golden, another was silver, and a third was pure white. Then he received his usual basket of food and walked home. He showed his grandmother what he had brought, but she answered him in the usual way, while he told her again that he would look after things in the future.

The nobleman and his wife came home soon after this, and as they thought it was time that their daughter should marry, the father conceived the strange idea that whosoever could name three hidden marks on his daughter, should have her for wife. Soon many young men arrived from every corner of the country, and guessed all sorts of things, but not one of them thought of the right thing.

The ragged boy had heard about this strange offer and he also went to the mansion. He ran about outside the windows, singing : "I know what I would say ! I

know what I would say!" The young lady heard this and grew very angry; she threw him some money out of the window and said: "Go home, you naughty boy!" He put the money in his cap, but continued to sing his old song: "I know what I would say! I know what I would say!" The young lady grew very frightened lest she might be compelled to marry a poor ragged boy, so she threw more money out of the window to him and said: "Do go away, you tiresome boy! I cannot endure your singing any longer." But he just put the money in his cap and began his old song once more.

He had tried repeatedly to slip into the mansion, but each time he had been driven back by the servants who would not admit such a ragged fellow. Presently he saw a young nobleman who was going to try his luck. The nobleman had noticed the boy and heard his little song, so he said to him: "What is it that you know?" "I know the secret hidden marks on the squire's daughter," said the boy. "Tell me what they are, and I will reward you well," said the young nobleman. "Yes, I will tell you what they are," said the boy, "but you must take me with you into the house, so that I can see the fun. You can easily hide me under your cloak, and then I can slip in with you."

That was easily done, and although the young noble looked rather stout, nobody noticed anything amiss. The two came into the room, where a number of suitors were trying to guess the riddle, but none of them had discovered the right thing. Then the boy cried from

under the cloak : "The lady has one golden hair, one silver hair, and one white hair on her head." "That is correct!" said the squire. The boy came forth from his hiding-place, declaring that they must give him the young lady as his wife, and at the same time he waved his cap so that all his money rolled on the floor.

The squire was greatly taken aback ; he could not break his word and yet he had not expected such a son-in-law. Then he said : "What is all that money on the floor?" "That is the money your daughter gave me to be silent," said the boy. "What do you mean by that?" asked the squire. "Out with it! Tell me all that has happened." The boy related his story from the very beginning, telling the squire about the cow and the three little pigs, he described how he had sold the first pig and what he had received for it, and then how he had sold the second one, and what he had got for that. When the squire heard that his daughter had given him a kiss in exchange for it he would not hear any more, but turned to his daughter and said : "Well, if you have kissed him, you shall marry him!" And so it happened ; the two were made man and wife and loved each other very dearly all their life long.

The Dumb Queen

THERE was once a married couple who possessed a little property of their own, and were always happy and of good cheer. But they lacked one thing, and this sometimes made them rather sad : they had no children. One day an old woman came walking past, and, as she was tired, she asked whether she might rest in their house for a few minutes. They willingly invited her in, and gave her food and drink to refresh her. She looked all round the cosy room, and said at last : " How happy you people are ! You have everything that the heart can desire." But they told her what a great grief it was to them that they had no children, whereupon she offered to help them, promising that before many days were past they should have a little child. So overjoyed were the two, that they promised her a hundred golden sovereigns if she could procure this happiness for them.

" Very well, let a messenger come to my house to-morrow," said the old woman—who was a witch —" and I will send something that the good lady must eat, and her wish shall be fulfilled." Next day they sent the boy who helped in the garden, and the old witch had a box ready which she gave him to take to his mistress. She warned him earnestly not to open the lid nor to let anyone see what was in the box.

The boy started home again, but he had about seven miles to walk, so he soon grew hungry and tired, and

sat down by the roadside. While he was resting, it occurred to him that surely there could be no harm in looking into the box. When he took off the lid, he found nothing in the box but a salt herring! "Surely it is not worth a journey of seven miles out and seven miles back just for that," he thought. "We have plenty of herrings at home;" and, as he was rather hungry, he ate the herring there and then. Soon he got up and walked on, but he had scarcely gone a few yards when he began to feel very ill, and after a while he collapsed and lost consciousness altogether. When he awoke it was dark. Now he was thoroughly alarmed at his strange predicament, and his terror increased when he found a little new-born baby lying beside him. This gave him such a fright that he jumped up and ran away as fast as he could, forgetting all about the herring and the baby.

The little babe lay the whole night on the high road, for nobody passed that way; but in the early morning a raven, who happened to have his nest in a lime-tree close by, came flying along. He was seeking food for his young ones, so he picked up the babe—it was a little girl—and flew with it to his nest. There he warmed it under his wings and fed it as he did his own young ones.

Close beside the wood where the lime-tree grew was a large castle, and in the castle dwelt a widowed queen who had an only son, twelve years old. When he was fifteen he would be crowned king of his country; but as he was still under age his mother ruled in his stead.

Now it happened about this time that the young prince rode out into the forest with a great retinue of servants to hunt, and they came directly to the tree where the little girl lay in the raven's nest. By chance the prince's horse—it was a beautiful little animal, usually as gentle as a lamb—shied when it came near the tree, and all the other horses shied also, so that it was impossible to get them past it. "Let us ride back a little and then try to pass it at full gallop," proposed the prince. They rode back and then set their horses at a gallop, as the prince had suggested; but it was of no use. As soon as the horses came to the tree they stopped dead, some kicking their hind-legs in the air and throwing their riders to the ground. Then the prince, happening to look up at the tree, thought he saw a pair of chubby baby arms stretching themselves out of the nest, and he bade one of his servants climb up the tree and see what it was. There was great amazement when the servant came down with the little girl in his arms. The prince had the child taken at once to the castle, where a nurse was obtained for her. She received the best nursing and bringing up possible, and she grew into the prettiest girl that had ever been seen; she knew how to laugh and play; she could hear and see, yet she remained as dumb as a stone. When the child was three years old, the prince ascended the throne and became king of his country; but his mother, the widowed queen, still resided with him.

Days and years passed, and, to make a long story short, when the girl was fifteen years old, the young king

declared that she, and none other, must be his queen. The old queen told him that it was quite unsuitable for a king to marry a foundling, especially when the girl could not speak and let them know who were her parents. But discussion was of no avail; the king declared that the dumb foundling should be his queen, and in due time the two were married.

The young king and queen loved each other dearly, and were always happy and cheerful, but the old queen was very angry and bitter; she hated the young queen, and was always planning how she might injure her. Some time after the marriage, a war broke out, and the king had to march away to meet the enemy. While he was absent, a beautiful little prince was born; but the old queen took him out of the cradle and put in his place a little dog; then she wrote to the king saying that, because he had married a witch, a little puppy had been born to him. The baby prince she put into a box, which she left on the seashore. But the poor little child did not perish, for he was found by an old woman who lived in the woods near by, and she took him home and cared for him. When the king returned from the war, he was very sorry to learn from his mother about the puppy, but he loved his wife as much as ever. Some time afterward he went to war again, and again the same thing happened, only this time the old queen put a lambkin into the cradle in place of the new baby, and left the little prince on the seashore, announcing to the king that a little lamb had been born to him. The tiny prince was found by the old woman

who had rescued his baby brother, and the two were brought up together. The king returned from the war, and was very sad indeed; but in spite of what the old queen said against her daughter-in-law, the king would not believe any evil of the young wife whom he loved as dearly as ever.

Some time after, the king was forced to go to war a third time, and while he was absent another beautiful little prince was born at the palace, and with him the old queen did as she had done with the other two, putting in his place a fluffy kitten. The little boy was picked up by his brothers' foster mother and brought up with the other two boys. But this time the king's councillors went to him and told him that he could no longer keep a queen whose witchcraft brought such strange children into the court as royal princes, and that he must send her away. This time the king allowed himself to be persuaded, and sent a messenger to his mother, telling her that the young queen must depart. He directed that she was to be put on the same little mare which had caused her discovery, and that there should be given to her a peck of gold and a peck of silver, as well as six servants on horseback. In this fashion she was to be conducted out of his country and through three other kingdoms, so that he might never hear or see anything of her again.

When the wicked old queen received this message, she was greatly delighted, although it would have pleased her much better to have driven out her daughter-in-law in as poor a condition as she had come to them,

but she was afraid to do that. She meant to carry out the king's orders to the letter, and hastened to prepare everything. She told the young queen what the king had ordered, adding that it was a shame to make so much fuss over a witch ; she told her to leave early next morning and return to the outcast friends among whom she was born. The young queen knew perfectly well what had happened ; she knew that the princes had been little boys, but whether they were still alive or dead, she did not know, and she could not ask anybody, nor could she tell the truth, for she was dumb as a stone.

When she heard the sentence of her dear lord and master she was nearly heart-broken and she shed three bitter tears which she dried with her handkerchief. But the three tears turned into three spots of blood, and from that she knew that her three children were still alive. She also knew, alas, that each drop of blood meant the loss of an eye to each of them, so that now they could see with one eye only. She lay down with great sorrow in her heart, and yet she was filled with joy at the knowledge that her dear children were still alive. While she was pretending to be asleep, she heard the queen-mother whisper to her maid (who knew the secret and had helped the old queen in her wickedness) and caught the question : "I suppose nobody could give her the power of speech, so that she might betray us?" "There is no danger," said the maid, "although I know how she might gain that power." "How?" whispered the

old queen. The maid replied: "If at midnight on St. John's Eve, and that is to-night, for to-morrow is St. John's Day, she licked the dew off the grass of the churchyard three times, then she could speak. But luckily, she does not know it."

The young queen heard it all, but pretended to be asleep; she remained quiet till midnight, when she sprang from her bed, ran out into the churchyard and licked the grass three times. Then she ran indoors again and went to bed, without anybody having noticed her absence.

Next morning she was placed on her little brown mare; six servants on horseback accompanied her out of the castle, three in front and three behind, and they had a peck of gold and a peck of silver with them, which she was to receive when they had passed through three kingdoms. They rode day and night until they came to the first kingdom, and then one evening the young queen said: "I see a star far in the east." "No," said the servants, "that is not a star, it is a king's castle, which we shall reach to-night." She rode with her six servants up to the castle, where they were hospitably received, and the castaway queen dined at the king's own table. When the meal was over, and they were all sitting together in the king's hall, some one asked from what country the beautiful foreign lady had come. "If you desire to know that, you must guess my riddle," answered the queen, "and if you can guess it, you may keep my six servants and my gold and silver. If you cannot guess it, I keep my secret and you must give

me six more servants and horses and a peck of gold and one of silver, when I leave your castle to-morrow." The king agreed to that, and she asked them her riddle, as follows:

"*My father was a fish,*
My mother was a boy,
A raven fed me,
A lime-tree sheltered me,
A horse gave me a husband."

Nobody could guess the riddle, and the king had to keep his word, so next morning the castaway queen left the castle on her little brown mare with twelve servants on horseback, six in front and six behind, and with two pecks of gold and two pecks of silver. They rode again day and night, until they came to the second, and then to the third kingdom, and each time, when the queen had been entertained in the royal castles, she asked her riddle. But no one could solve it, so that, when she left the third castle, her retinue consisted of forty-eight servants on horseback—twenty-four in front and twenty-four behind—and four pecks of gold and four pecks of silver.

Then she said: "I have ridden far and suffered much. Now I will ride by the shortest way to my own country, and see whether my lord and master has returned."

So they rode on again through many a dark night and many a bright day, until they reached the country from which the poor queen had been driven forth. When they arrived there, the queen rode first to the forest where dwelt the old woman who had saved her three

children and brought them up. She found the woman in the house and saw the three children playing by the seashore. Then she said to the woman: "Those three little boys are mine, and you must give them to me." But the woman would not hear of such a thing, and said: "No, certainly not, they are my own; besides they are not very pretty, they have each only one eye." "If they have only one eye when they come home, you may keep them," said the queen, "but if they have their full sight, you must let me have them, and I will give you all the gold and silver I possess, and my thanks and blessing besides."

Then the woman called the three boys, who came running along. The queen kissed them and taking out her handkerchief with the three bloodstains on it, she wiped their eyes with it, and now each of them had two eyes as bright as stars. The old woman received all the queen's gold and silver, and the three little princes rode with the queen and her forty-eight servants to the castle; twenty-four servants rode in front and twenty-four behind.

When the king saw the strange procession coming toward his castle he went to meet it, and he at once recognized his queen, who fell on his neck and greeted him with kisses and tears. She showed him the three young princes and told him all that had happened. Then the king ordered a splendid feast to be prepared, at which the queen and the three little princes and the forty-eight servants were all present. But the old queen-mother was not there, for she was put into a fiery oven and burnt to cinders and ashes for her wickedness.

The Wise Queen

THERE was once a young prince who was so handsome that no one could rival him in appearance, and he was proud of his beauty. But he was also very wise, and he was likewise proud of his wisdom.

He took a solemn oath that he would never marry, unless he could find a wife who was as beautiful and wise as himself. There were plenty of pretty girls in his country, but they were not clever ; and again, there were many very clever girls who were not handsome. Try as he would, the prince could not find a maid nearly as beautiful and wise as he was. As he had reached a certain age, his father, the king, as well as his faithful subjects, were of opinion that it was time for the prince to marry ; but he had made his vow, and there was not a single girl in the country whom he could ask in marriage.

Accordingly, he decided to travel to other countries, but he determined that he would do so unknown to anyone and without servants, so that nobody could betray his reason for travelling. He journeyed through many foreign countries, but nowhere did he find a girl either handsome or wise enough for him, and certainly no one who was both.

One day he was riding all alone through a thick forest ; he rode and rode, but the forest did not come to an end. Mid-day came, and then evening, but he could not see any way out of the wood ; he had completely

lost his way. He did not know where he was, or where he could find shelter for himself and his horse, and they were both very tired and hungry indeed.
At last he saw a thin streak of blue smoke rising above the tree-tops, and when he had followed its direction for some time, he came to a shabby little house. He dismounted, and when he knocked at the door, an old man opened it, and an old woman came out also. They seemed astonished to see the handsome, beautifully dressed young horseman, who bade them good evening and asked them for a night's shelter. They told him at first that they were very poor and could not entertain such a distinguished-looking visitor, and it could easily be seen that they were anxious to get rid of him. But when the prince told them that neither he nor his horse could go a single step farther, they were compelled to invite him to partake of such shelter and food as they were able to give him.
The prince first looked after his faithful horse. As there was no stable, but only a small byre for a cow, which luckily was pasturing outside, he put his horse in the byre and gave it some water and a bundle of hay. Then he went into the one room, which was very small and had a low roof. Here he sat down on the wooden bench and began to talk with the two old people, asking them whether they lived quite alone in this large wild forest. They said that they did, for there were no other people in their household and no houses for many miles around. They lived as best they could, and managed to subsist on what they obtained

from their goat and their cow. They gave him supper, consisting of a piece of dry bread and a bowl of milk, and then they brought a bundle of straw which they spread on the floor for themselves, inviting the prince to occupy their bed. He would not accept this offer, but insisted that they should keep their bed, and he would lie down on the straw.

When they saw that he was determined to have his way, they gave in, and all three went to bed. The prince's bed was very different, of course, from the couch to which he was accustomed, but as he was very tired, he soon fell asleep and dreamt of all the beautiful girls who were not clever, and of all the clever girls who were not beautiful, and he slept soundly until morning dawned. Then he awoke feeling stiff in all his limbs, owing to his hard bed, and however much he turned he could not sleep any longer.

Then he heard something moving about in the upper story just over his head ; he thought it might be rats or mice, or perhaps a cat, jumping about there. But then he heard a whirring sound as if some one were working at a spinning-wheel ; that could not be a cat. All at once he heard singing. This was the voice of neither cats nor birds, but a lovely human voice which sang to the turning of the wheel. He had never before heard such charming music, so he jumped up from his couch, rubbed his eyes and listened attentively ; and just then the two old people woke up also and got out of bed.

The prince asked them whom they had hidden upstairs,

and who was now spinning and singing in the early morning. But by this time the music had ceased, and they assured him, as they had done the day before, that no one but themselves lived in the house.

"It is of no use your trying to deceive me," said the prince. "I am certain that I heard a human voice singing, and you had better tell me the truth, for if you do not I shall find out for myself."

Then the old man confessed that there was another person living in the house, and that it was their daughter who had her bedroom upstairs. They had always been afraid that she might be seen by some one who would take a liking to her and wish to marry her, and as they were getting old and frail, they could not do without her; besides she was earning a little by spinning and weaving, and who else would look after them when they could no longer do so themselves.

To that the prince answered, that as he had heard her, he wished to see her, he was not an ogre, and they need have no fear that he would eat her. Then they called the girl downstairs and she came running down in her poor garments. She did not know that there was a visitor in the house, because she had been fast asleep when the prince arrived the night before.

When she saw the handsome young man she blushed crimson, and the prince seemed to lose all power of speech, for he had never before seen anyone who could compare with her in beauty. The daughter of this poor man was much handsomer than all the princesses and fine ladies whom he had seen during his travels, or

at home ; he could not imagine anyone more charming. But of course, it would never do for him to marry a beggar-maid.

He therefore cast down his eyes and hastened to saddle his horse and ride away as fast as he could ; he would not look at her any more. But when he had sprung into the saddle and had given the old people a gold coin for their hospitality and they were making one curtsey after another, he could not help throwing some furtive glances toward the pretty maid. Then he felt compelled by some impulse to raise his hat and bid her farewell, and he felt his heart beat very quickly when he saw how she blushed and cast down her eyes. But when he rode off, she raised her eyes again and watched him until he was quite out of sight, and as for him, those eyes seemed to follow him long after the little house and the large forest lay far behind him. He said to himself, however : " Nay, indeed she is beautiful enough to be my wife, but I have vowed that she whom I will marry must be wise also, as wise as I am myself, and of course she cannot be that."

He took good note of the position of the little cottage, and soon found himself on roads that he knew well, for the great forest was close to the boundaries of his own country. Then he rode straight to his father's castle and told the king that he had not found a girl he could marry. The old king was very ill pleased at that ; he was so convinced of his son's great wisdom that he was sure it must be as he said, and yet he wished to see him married during his own lifetime. If his son would only

choose a mate, he was quite certain that his choice would be a wise one.

Now the prince was at home again and settled down to his former manner of living, but he found no peace. He did not enjoy his meals, nor would sleep come to him on his soft couch. His thoughts roamed continually out into the great forest where lived the lovely young maiden, and he thought of her day and night, whether he liked it or not.

At last he said to himself: "This must come to an end." He remembered his vow, that only the wisest and handsomest was to be his wife, and in order to forget all about the girl, he decided to make sure that the daughter of those poor people, however handsome she was, was certainly not wise enough to be a suitable match for him. Accordingly he wrote a letter to her and enclosed two strands of silk, asking her to weave him a bed-curtain from them.

He sent a royal groom with the letter and bade him bring back a reply. The groom returned in the evening and brought back from the maid a letter in which were enclosed two little wooden pegs. The letter said: "If you will make a loom out of these two pegs then will I weave the bed-curtain you have ordered."

Now the prince could not deny the fact that the girl was as clever as he was, and he had to carry out his vow, which he was not at all loth to do. He rode to the forest with his royal retinue and told the old people that he had chosen their daughter for his bride. Both parents and daughter were quite content.

The prince leaves the cottage

But now it suddenly occurred to him that she might even be wiser than he was, and that, of course, would never do, because people might notice it. He, therefore, made a condition that, when they were once married, she should never interfere in any affairs of the state which concerned him and not her. If she disobeyed that order he would be entitled to cast her off and send her home to her parents.

She agreed to that condition but made another in return. This was, that if ever he became tired of her and decided to send her home, she should be allowed to take away with her whatever she liked best. He considered that condition quite just and agreed to it.

The old people were very sad indeed at losing their child, but they would not put any obstacles in the way of her happiness and gave their consent. The bride was then decked in silk and purple, with gold and jewels, and was supplied with carriages and horses, ladies-in-waiting, and everything necessary for her new station, and then the marriage was celebrated with great splendour.

For a long time the young couple lived happily ; they were devoted to each other, and everything seemed bright and cheerful. The young wife was thought by everybody to be as handsome as she was wise, and she was also kind and generous. The old king died soon after the marriage, and his son ruled in his stead ; he was a just and lenient ruler, loved by his people, and the queen, according to her promise, never interfered

in matters of state, but attended zealously to her household matters.

Then it happened one day that a great market was held in the king's capital, and many farmers came to it with corn and other country produce. As they drove home in the evening, they must needs stop at the first roadside inn and have some refreshment; so they sat down in the inn parlour, while their horses and carts were put in the stable. Now it happened that while the men were sitting inside, a foal was born to one of the mares, and when the farmers came out again, each looking for his own vehicle, the little foal got up, ran about in the stable, and took refuge in a corner where two of the landlord's horses were standing. The owner of the mare at once claimed the foal as his property, and prepared to take it home with him; but the landlord said that the foal was his, as it was beside his horses. So they began quarrelling and disputing, some taking the farmer's part, some the landlord's; but in the end the majority sided with the landlord, and the farmer had to drive home without his foal, which the landlord kept.

The farmer, of course, did not submit to that, and went to law; but both in the first and second instances the decision was in favour of the landlord, and the poor farmer, who was indeed the rightful owner of the foal, had to pay all the expenses, so that he was nearly ruined. But he was so sure of his case that he appealed to the highest court, at which the king himself presided. The latter, as we know, was very wise indeed; but in

this case he was wrong, for he decided as the others had done, and said that, as the foal had been found beside the landlord's horses, it was his property.

This was very hard for the poor farmer, who, although he was in the right, was now to lose even his farm to pay all the additional expenses. In his great trouble he applied to the good queen, who was known to be as just as she was wise, and after he had explained the whole matter to her, she saw that he was right. Then she said to him : " Well, my good man, I cannot alter the decision of the king, but I will give you a piece of advice that may perhaps help you. To-morrow, at noontide, go to the seashore with a fisherman's net and put it out along the sands, just as the fishermen put out their nets in the sea. Then take a long pole and beat the sand with it, just as the fishermen beat the sea, to drive the fish into the nets. Then, when the king comes past—he drives along the sands every day at that time—he is sure to ask you why you are doing such a foolish thing, and whether you think you can catch fish on the dry land. Then you must answer him, that it is not any more senseless than to imagine that the grey horse of the landlord could be the mother of a foal. But you must not tell him who has advised you to say so, or I shall suffer for it." The farmer thanked the queen very much, and promised to do as she had told him.

Next day, at noontide, the farmer did exactly as the queen had told him, and as the king came past shortly after he had begun to spread his net, the farmer

went on beating the sand with his pole in front of the net. The king ordered his coachman to stop and asked the farmer: "What are you doing there?" "I am fishing," said the farmer. "You are very stupid," said the king. "Do you think that there are any fish on the dry land?" "It is not more stupid," answered the farmer, "than to imagine that the landlord's grey stallion should be the mother of a foal."

The king understood at once to what the farmer was alluding, and perceived that his decision had been wrong, but he wanted to know who had advised the farmer to try this trick. He threatened him with death unless he confessed who had given him this advice, and the poor man, terribly frightened, told him that he owed the idea to the queen's suggestion.

This roused the king's anger, and he ordered his coachman to turn at once and drive back to the castle. He went to the queen and told her that she had broken the promise she had given him before the marriage, and had dared to interfere in his affairs of state. Now she would have to suffer the punishment agreed upon and return at once to her parents. He told her she must depart that very hour, but she could avail herself of the right conceded to her, and take with her whatever she liked best.

The queen answered very humbly and submissively that he was right, and that she had acted wrongly. She would obey his orders, and would be ready in a moment to pack what by the king's gracious permission she might be allowed to take away with her. Then

she brought a flagon of wine and two glasses and asked the king to drink a glass of wine with her in farewell. There had never been an angry word between them, she said, and so they should part as friends.
The king could not refuse her request, and after she had filled the glasses, they drank to each other. But he had not noticed that she poured a few drops from a small phial into his glass, and as soon as he had drunk the wine he fell into a deep sleep.
Then the queen sent for a large linen basket, and she put the king into it, covered him up well and closed the lid. Now she ordered her servants to carry the basket outside and put it into the carriage which stood waiting for her. She then drove away to the old cottage in the woods, and there the servants lifted the basket from the carriage and carried it upstairs into her little room. She lifted the sleeping king from the basket and laid him on her bed, dressed herself in the same shabby garments in which he had seen her the first time, sat down by the window opposite the bed, and made her spinning-wheel hum as in the olden days.
It was toward evening when the king awoke from the sleeping draught that the queen had given him, and he looked around, jumped up, and asked where he was and how it had happened that he was there. "Well," she said, "you are in my house now. I have brought you here according to our agreement, which provided that I was entitled to take with me whatever I liked best in the whole world."
"I see now that you are much wiser than I," said

the king ; " and if you will accompany me back to the castle and stay with me, then I promise never again to come to any decision without asking your advice."

The carriage and horses were then sent for, and the king and queen made their second entrance into their domains, but this time, at the queen's request, they took her parents with them, and the old people stayed at the castle all their days. As for the king and queen themselves, they lived as before in love and devotion, surrounded by all the splendour of their high position. The poor farmer who had been wronged by the king's decision received from the king a large estate, stocked with everything needful, and the monarch never again decided any case without first asking the queen's advice. They were loved and honoured by all for their kindness and justice, and the people were proud indeed to have such a king and such a queen.

For Three Shillings

ONCE upon a time there was a soldier who had served his king for eight years. At the end of that time he was permitted to go home, which of course was very agreeable to him ; but when he asked for his pay they gave him only three shillings, that being all that was due to him. This was not so pleasant, but as he set out on his way home, in spite of his lack of money, he was quite cheerful, twirling his stick about and singing so that his voice re-echoed from the hills.

As he was walking along in this happy fashion, he met an old woman who asked him for a shilling. " Why, I have only three shillings myself," he said, " but whether I have three or two, will make no difference," and he gave her one of the coins. He had not gone very much farther when he met another old woman— it was really she whom he had met before, but he did not know that. " Good day, and may peace be with you ! " she said. " Thank you ! " he answered. " Please give a shilling to a poor woman ! " said she. " Well, I have only two shillings, he answered, " but whether I have one or two, it will make no difference," and he gave her the second shilling, for which she thanked him, and then he went on his way again. He had journeyed only a short distance, when he again met an old woman, but it never occurred to him that it could still be the woman who had already received two shillings from him. " Good day, and may peace be

with you, my son!" she said. "Thanks, my good woman!" said he. "Could you spare a shilling for a poor old woman?" she asked. "Well, I have just one shilling left," answered the soldier, "but whether I have one or none, it will make no difference." And so the poor old woman got his last shilling, thanked him, and hobbled off.

The soldier went cheerfully on his way, light in pocket, but easy in mind; he now possessed nothing but the clothes he was wearing, and the old knapsack he was carrying on his back. The knapsack was light enough too, for there was nothing in it, except a patched shirt and a pair of darned socks. But the soldier stroked his beard, puffed at his half-empty pipe, and then twirled his stick about and went on singing again, so that his songs re-echoed from the hills.

After a time he came into a wood, where he again met the old woman to whom he had given all his money. There she was sitting by the wayside, and when she saw him she greeted him with: "Good day, my son! Have you time for a chat with a poor old woman?" "Yes, if it would give you pleasure," he answered; "my time is not very precious; but what can you have to talk about with me?" "Are there not three wishes which you would like to have fulfilled?" "Oh yes, certainly there are," he said. "Well, then, wish!" said the old woman.

The soldier was not long in making up his mind what to wish for first he wished for the grace and forgiveness of God; then he wished that his knapsack might

never wear out; and last of all, he wished that whatever he wanted in his knapsack might be there, and that it should remain there until he wanted it out again. "It shall be as you wish," said the old woman; "and now, good-bye, and good luck to you on your journey!" "Thanks!" shouted the soldier, and walked on again. But for the first hour or two he did not think of his wishes; he fancied the whole thing was only a joke and an old woman's foolishness. After he had been walking for some time, he thought that it would have been very pleasant if what the old woman had said about those wishes had been really true. He had just come to a stretch of moorland, where there was nothing but sand and heather and stones, one big stone after another. As he was walking along, thinking of his wishes, he knocked his foot very hard against one of those big stones. "Oh, I wish you were inside my knapsack!" he cried. Scarcely had he said this, when the stone was inside; but at the same moment he was thrown backward and stood right on his head, for the big stone was heavier than he had thought. He was quite confused by his heavy fall, and it was some time before he could gather his scattered wits and understand how he had come into this queer position. But as soon as he remembered, he wished the stone out of his knapsack, and there it lay on the heath, while he found himself again on his feet. Now he knew that there was no deception about the old woman's gift, and he resolved to make better use of his wishes in the future.

By this time he had walked a good distance, so that he was very hungry, and when he came to a large house he thought he would go in and see if he could get something to eat. He went into the kitchen and saw the housekeeper, who was busy cutting bread and butter. He asked her to give him a piece, but she answered that the people of the house were so stingy that there was never anything left over after every one had taken his share, so that she dare not give him anything. The master, however, was in his room, and there was a chance that he would allow her to give the soldier something, and if he happened to be in good humour, he might even offer him a trifle to help him on his way ; if the soldier liked to go in, she would show him the way. He accepted her suggestion with thanks, and when he came to the door of the master's room, he knocked.

The master was sitting at his table counting money, and before him stood a large earthenware jar full of gold-pieces, while beside him on the floor stood a large chest with iron bands, full of silver coins. The soldier knocked at the door, and the master of the house, thinking that it was one of his tenants coming to pay his rent, called out very cheerfully : "Come in!" When he found that it was some one asking for alms, he grew very angry and shouted : "Get out of this, quickly!" The soldier did not wait to be told a second time to go, but turned right about and continued his wanderings on the high road. But, although he had been bundled out of the room so speedily, he, before

leaving, had seen the jar of gold and the iron-bound chest full of silver money.

After he had walked for some time and was a good distance from the farm, he said to himself: "You shall suffer for this, you greedy old man; you might have spared me a little of your money," and he wished that all the gold coins he had seen were in his knapsack. Suddenly there was a "bang" and he felt the gold jump into the knapsack. "It would not be amiss, either," he thought, "if I had some of the silver money, but I do not want more than I can carry"; and so he wished a few hundreds of the silver coins to be in his knapsack; there was another "bang" and he felt the money jumping in. "Serves you right!" said the soldier, and walked on till he came to a town.

There he went into the best inn, where he sat down at a table, and being very hungry he ate as if he had not had any food for a week. The fine gentlemen who were dining at the same table, looked stealthily at the common fellow, and smiled and whispered to each other about his wonderful appetite. When they got up, and each paid for his meal, the soldier pretended to be searching for money in his empty pockets, but he brought out nothing but a little plug of tobacco. This set the gentlemen laughing and jeering, and one of them asked whether the stranger had perhaps had the misfortune to leave his money at home, but had brought his appetite with him instead. Having, of course, found no money in his pockets, the soldier began to rummage in his knapsack, which set all the guests roaring with

laughter, while the landlord looked on somewhat anxiously. When the soldier drew out some ducats and threw them on the table the laughter ceased. The landlord's face became wreathed in smiles and he began bowing and scraping, and thanked the soldier most profusely, asking him at the same time, whether he would not do him the honour of drinking a bottle of wine with him. The soldier did not refuse, and when they had emptied the bottle he asked the landlord to give him a bedroom where he could pass the night.

The landlord expressed his great regret that all his bed rooms except one were occupied, and that one he could not offer to anybody, because every one who had tried to spend the night in it, had been found dead in bed next morning. This had happened many times, and now the room was never occupied. "That is just the kind of room I should like!" cried the soldier. "Have it ready by bed-time, and in it put a table laid with a good supper. Place on the table four candles, four bottles of wine, and four packs of cards, and then give me the key." The landlord said that if the gentleman wished to try it, he would obey, and everything should be ready by bed-time.

When the time came, the soldier went to his room, emptied the gold and silver from his knapsack, lit all the candles and put them on the table, where a sumptuous supper and four bottles of good wine had been placed, together with the four packs of cards. Then he sat down and waited to see what would happen. He had not been sitting long before he heard a loud

The soldier invited them to sit down and enjoy their supper

rumbling in the fireplace, and all at once a large black ball came tumbling on to the floor of the room, and unrolled itself into a long black imp, with horns and tail, and claws and fierce tusks ; it was not a pretty thing to look at. The soldier, however, did not mind, but said very politely : " Please, my good friend, take a seat and enjoy your supper ! "

Scarcely had he finished speaking when a second rumbling was heard, and then a third, and each time another black ball came rolling out of the fireplace, changing into a big long imp, each one more awful than the other. The soldier received them all with equal politeness, and invited them to sit down and enjoy their supper. They sat down, ate and drank to their hearts' content, and when they had cleared the table, took up the cards and began to play, each with a different pack of cards. But at the same time they gradually drew nearer to the soldier and began to pinch him.

" Now," he thought, " it will be time to get rid of them, before they get too familiar." He wished that they should all three be in his knapsack, which was lying on the floor. " Bang ! " it went, and inside they were, and however much they squirmed and wriggled they could not get out. " Now, let me have a talk with you," said the soldier ; " you will have to stay where you are until I let you out, and I want you to tell me why you haunt this room." They told him that they came there because there was a large jar full of gold under the hearth. " Is that all ? " said the soldier. " Well, there is no hurry about that ! Good

night, try to sleep well." Then he undressed, went to bed and slept soundly till next day.
Early next morning the landlord came up to the room and peeped through the key-hole; he saw the soldier lying in his bed, but could not see whether he was dead or alive. He thought it was most probable that he had fared like all the others who had slept in the room and he began to shout and to knock at the door. The noise awakened the soldier, who told the landlord to go away and leave him in peace; he had paid for his room and wished to remain undisturbed. The landlord was very glad indeed to find that the soldier was still alive, and although he was very anxious to know what had happened during the night, he had to wait till it pleased the soldier to get up, which was about the middle or the day. But all he learned in answer to his questions, was that the soldier had slept excellently, and that he wanted his breakfast.
When he had finished it, he asked the landlord whether there were any strong men in the town; and when the landlord had told him that there were, the soldier bade him send for a few of the strongest he could find. "May I make so bold as to ask why you want them?" questioned the landlord. The soldier replied that he wanted them to carry his knapsack to the forge, where the smith was to give it a thorough beating, because it had become so dusty and dirty on the high road. He needed two of the strongest fellows that could be found, because his knapsack was very heavy and could be carried only by very strong men.

A knapsack to be taken to the forge! Two strong men to carry it there! "Ah well," thought the landlord, "the fellow has not quite recovered from the wine he had last night. I never heard of such a thing before. I wonder if he is making a fool of me. Still, I suppose I must humour him." So he did as he was ordered, and soon came back with the sturdiest fellows he could find. The soldier then asked them to take his knapsack to the forge, and promised them a florin for the job. They agreed to do it, and thought that never had a florin been earned more easily; but they soon found that they had made a great mistake, for the knapsack was so heavy that it brought them to their knees with every step they took. At last, however, they managed to drag it to the forge, and the landlord, who had come with them, told the blacksmith that there was a gentleman who wanted his knapsack beaten. He whispered to him also that the man had been drinking heavily the night before, and had not quite recovered from his intoxication; but as he was a good customer, it would be well to humour him in his foolish whims. The blacksmith liked a good joke, so he smiled very pleasantly, scratched his head, and thought that this would be fine fun for his journeymen, as they had never done that kind of work before. The soldier now asked the blacksmith what he would charge for beating his knapsack, and the smith told him that he would do it for a couple of shillings, whereupon the soldier said that he would give half a sovereign with pleasure, if the work were

done thoroughly. "No sooner said than done," said the smith; "not a speck of dust shall be found in your knapsack when we are finished with it; but whether anything of it remains at all, I should not like to promise." "Never you mind that," said the soldier. The two strong men then lifted the bag on to the anvil, and the smith ordered three of his journeymen to take large hammers and beat the dust out of the knapsack. They saw the fun of the thing, rolled up their sleeves, wetted their hands, and commenced to beat with all their might. But at the very first stroke they dropped their hammers in terror, because all through the smithy rang such a whining and howling as had never been heard before.

The soldier urged the men to go on with their work, and so they proceeded, blow after blow falling upon the knapsack, until the sweat ran in streams from their black faces. They thought that the knapsack would soon be in shreds and tatters, but, strange to say, it remained just as sound as it had been before they placed it on the anvil. "Yes, go on beating," said the soldier; "there is the dust of many years in that knapsack, and it requires a thorough beating." But the three merry blacksmiths soon became tired of the hard work, and had to drop their hammers, as they could no longer wield them, and so their master called three other men, and they took up the work their companions had left. Surely the leather of the knapsack must be bewitched, they thought, and they attacked the iron bands around the knapsack, as iron was the material they knew best,

and they thought they would soon settle it. But, although they kept on hammering with all their might, neither leather nor iron would yield to their blows, and when at last the hammers dropped from their hands, they had not made the least impression on either ; in fact, the knapsack looked just as good as before.

Now the soldier also thought that it was enough and so he paid the blacksmith and ordered the two strong fellows to carry his knapsack to the banks of a river which flowed close by the town. There he opened it, and behold ! it was filled to the very top with something that looked like a black powder, and that was all that remained of the bodies of the wicked imps, who had thus been crushed to powder. He threw all this powder into the brook, and then walked with the landlord to the inn. There he told him that he knew where a big jar full of gold was hidden in his house, and that if he would share it with him, he would tell him where to find it. As the landlord was only too willing to do so, they had the fireplace torn down, and below it found a large brewer's vat full of gold coins. The landlord was so pleased at the discovery that he made the soldier a present of a large piece of land that he owned near the town, and there the soldier built himself a house and lived happily. God's peace and forgiveness were vouchsafed to him, and all that he required he had the power of obtaining by merely wishing for it. And all that the soldier got for three shillings !

The Cobbler's Lad

THERE was once a cobbler's lad whose father had been a clergyman. His parents had intended their son to become a clergyman also, but he lost both his father and his mother before he was fourteen years of age, and there was no one to look after him and make him attend to his lessons. Thus it happened that he was apprenticed to the village cobbler, and at the time when this story begins, he had been with him for three years. Many a good beating with the cobbler's strap had he received when he was caught idling and twisting the waxed thread round his finger instead of sewing with it, or when he made faces behind the cobbler's back instead of driving wooden tacks into the soles of the boots. Nevertheless the cobbler's thrashing had been the means of teaching the lad everything pertaining to his work, and although he had never really taken kindly to the cobbler's last, he could cut out and sew and stitch, as well as patch and peg.

Then it happened that one day his master told him that he might take a day's holiday, and instead of stitching at the cobbler's bench, go out into the wood and cut pegs, as they had none left in the workshop. The boy ran out into the woods as quickly as he could, because he liked the open air, but he did not give a single thought to his pegs; he climbed every hill and went down into every dale to look for brambles and birds' nests, to watch the ants' heaps, and to catch butterflies,

and so the day passed, and when evening came he had not cut a single peg. Then he suddenly remembered the purpose for which he had come into the woods and he began to look for elder-bushes, for it is elder-wood out of which cobblers' pegs are cut. He did not find any, and it had grown so dark that he could not tell where he was. He could think of nothing except how to get out of the dark wood, and he ran very quickly until at last he saw the open fields again. Just as he stepped out of the wood, a big dog came jumping up at him barking loudly, and, strangely enough, the boy could understand what the dog wanted. "Bow-wow, boy!" he said, "you must come back into the woods with me at once; there is some one who wants to speak with you." The dog leaped round him and continued to bark, so the boy did not venture to disobey him, but followed him into the woods. There on the ground lay a fine large stag with crown-antlers, quite dead, while beside it a huge brown bear stood and roared. Close by on a branch a white falcon sat and crowed, and on a blade of grass chirped a small black ant, though at first the boy could neither see nor hear the ant. Then the bear bade the lad divide the stag among the four of them; they had all a claim upon it, but they could not agree to the division of the booty. The boy pulled out his cobbler's knife and skinned the stag, then he cut off the head and gave it to the ant. "This will suit you best," he said; it has so many holes and crevices where you can run in and out." Then he cut open the animal and took out all the

entrails and gave them to the falcon. "These will suit you best," he said; "they are soft and tender to pick at with your beak." Then he cut off the legs and gave them to the dog. "They will suit you best," he said, "because they are good for you to gnaw." But the trunk he gave to the bear. "You are big and strong," he said, "and are best able to tear it." They were all well content with the division, and each began to attack his share. The boy himself took the hide and hurried away with it, thinking: "When my master gets this beautiful stag's hide, he will let me off my punishment for not having brought home any pegs."

But just when he was leaving the forest, the dog came running after him and said that he was to come back for a moment, as the bear wanted to speak to him. The lad was frightened at this, because he thought that they would not allow him to take the stag's hide with him. He told the dog what was troubling him, saying that if he had done wrong in taking the hide, he was very sorry, and would give it back. Besides, he was not anxious to face the bear again, thinking that now that the creatures had devoured their prey, they might perhaps want to make a meal of him. But the dog assured him that he need not be afraid; the bear only wanted to have a little talk with him. He could keep the hide if it was of any use to him.

Accordingly, he returned to the bear who received him in a very friendly manner, and said that the four of them had decided to make him a present, because he had divided the booty so wisely. He was henceforth

to possess the power of transforming himself into a bear, as big and strong and wise as he was himself, and then, whenever he liked, he could become a human being again. And the dog said that at will he could change into a dog, as swift as he was himself, and possessed with the same strong scent; and the falcon told him that he could change into a falcon, with feathers as fine, pinions as swift, and eyes as sharp as his own; and at last the ant promised him the power of changing into an ant, as small and pretty and clever as she herself was.

The boy thanked them very much and set out on his way home. But when he came near the cobbler's workshop he reflected that to handle the awl and thread all day long was a miserable life. "Oh, if only I were a falcon!" he thought, and in the same moment he was one. He spread out his wings and shot through the air like an arrow, and flew on and on over land and water; he wanted to fly a long way, and so at last he found himself in Spain. There he rested, and was delighted with everything he saw—hills and dales, towns and people—all were so strange and beautiful.

He fluttered about until he came to a large castle, much larger and more splendid than any he had ever seen; it was quite easy to see that it was a king's castle. But the strange thing about it was that all the windows looking toward east, west and south, were walled up, and that light and air could get into the castle only through the windows facing the north. In front of the house was a beautiful garden where the sun shone, the flowers

breathed sweet perfume and the birds sang. The falcon flew thither and perched in a high tree right in front of an open window. Inside there was a great company ; a beautiful young princess was sitting with her ladies-in-waiting, and her father, the king, was there also. The queen was dead, and as the princess was an only child, the king loved her very dearly ; it was for her sake that he had rebuilt the castle in such a way that there were no windows except toward the north. It had been prophesied at her birth, that if ever the sun were to shine upon her before she was thirty years of age, she would be carried off by a goblin to whom her mother had promised her before her birth. The princess was now fifteen years old, and during all these years she had been compelled to live indoors ; only in the evening, when the sun had set, could she take a short walk in the gardens ; at other times she had to stay in the castle.

You can well understand that the falcon made good use of his eyes, for never had the poor cobbler's lad seen such a beautiful maiden, with hair as black as a raven's wings and a skin as dazzingly white as the falcon's white feathers. The princess was the first to see the wild bird, and she said to the king : " Look, father, at that beautiful foreign bird out yonder in the tree ! " " Yes," replied the father, " you may well look at it ; that is a rare bird whose home is in the far north ; he has quite a royal bearing and is like a king among birds. It might be worth while to possess him, if one could only catch him."

The princess's lady-in-waiting was an experienced old dame, and said she knew how to catch such wild birds. She tied a string to the window and laid a bait of meat on the window-sill, and then everybody left the room except the princess, who desired to capture the bird herself. She hid inside the room, with the end of the string in her hand and waited until the falcon came to the window-sill and perched there, then she shut the window and the falcon was caught. But it had not been for the sake of the bait that he had come to the window, it was when he no longer saw the princess, and thought the room empty, that he could not resist the temptation to fly inside and look for her.

And so he was caught, but when he saw in whose net he was, he was not at all displeased. He became quite tame and allowed the princess to handle and stroke him and to put him in a large gilded cage, as if he were a parrot. Then the princess called all the others, and the king and the ladies-in-waiting could not admire the beautiful foreign bird sufficiently, while the princess herself was so pleased and so proud of her capture that the cage was not allowed to stand anywhere but in her own room.

The falcon suffered no hardships: the princess fed him with bread and meat and addressed him by all kinds of pet names, and yet he soon got tired of perching all day long in the cage. Early one morning when the daylight peeped into the window, and the princess was still sleeping, it occurred to him to say: "Oh, if I were an ant now!" and in a moment he was changed into

an ant and could easily run out of the cage. But when he found himself crawling on the floor, he thought he would like to be a cobbler's lad again, and in a moment he stood on his two legs in the middle of the princess's bedroom. Just at that moment the princess awoke, cried out loudly and pulled the bell-rope that hung beside her bed, with all her might, so that the ladies-in-waiting and the maids came rushing in. But meanwhile the lad had quickly transformed himself back into an ant, and from an ant into a falcon, and was sitting quite sedately on his perch. When asked what had happened, the princess said that she had seen a young man in her bedroom ; they searched everywhere, in the wardrobes and under the bed, but nobody was there, and every one felt convinced that no one could have been there. A man could not walk into a room through locked doors and windows. The princess must either have dreamed it, or she must be ill, therefore they gave her pills and powders, and made her stay in bed the whole day. During the following night a lady-in-waiting watched beside her.

She slept quite peacefully that night, and when she rose in the morning she hastened to feed her falcon ; she made him sit on her hand and stroked his white feathers, kissed him, and called him her dearest friend, and told him it was a shame that she had neglected him the whole day. Then the falcon spoke and said : " You need not be afraid of me, princess ! " " What, can you speak ? " she exclaimed. He told her that he could, and if she would promise not to betray him, he would

tell her something of great importance. She promised most readily, and he then told her that he could, whenever he liked, change into an ant, a dog, and a bear, and then assume again his natural shape of a human being. Finally, he confessed that it was he who had caused her such fear the day before. The princess was curious to see him in all his transformations; she laughed at the ant, was delighted at the dog, and greatly frightened at the bear; but when she saw him in his own human shape, she was not at all afraid, but liked him very much, for, although she was a princess, and he only a cobbler's lad, he was very good-looking.

Henceforth he was not compelled to sit in his closed cage, but was at liberty to accompany her everywhere in his falcon's guise. He perched on her shoulder when she sat at table, and ate out of her hand, and she carried him on her hand when she took her evening walk with her ladies-in-waiting. But when she was alone with him in her room, he assumed his human form; they had a great deal to talk about, and they grew very fond of each other. They agreed that they would become man and wife; but the princess knew quite well that her father would never allow her to marry a cobbler's lad, any more than he would allow her to marry a bear, a dog, a falcon or an ant. But she thought of a means to overcome the difficulty; she gave the falcon a purse of gold, and told him to fly away, assume his human form, dress himself in royal garments, buy fine horses, take knights and page-boys into his

service, and then return in princely dress and ask her hand from her father.

So one day the falcon disappeared, and no one except the princess knew where he had gone. She pretended to be quite disconsolate over the loss of her beautiful falcon, and the king was really very vexed that the foreign bird had been lost. But nothing could be done, and the king had forgotten all about the falcon, and the princess had cast off her gloom, when one day a splendid procession entered the palace yard. This was the son of the King of England, it was said, and his name was Prince Falcon; he was accompanied by a retinue of knights and page-boys, and with twenty-four gaily caparisoned steeds, shining with gold and silver. They were received hospitably in the castle of the King of Spain, and the foreign prince told the king that he had come to woo his daughter.

The king replied that he would leave the decision to his daughter, as he did not wish to force a husband upon her; but he made the condition that whoever became her husband must share her residence and dwell with her in that part of the castle whose windows looked to the north. He would not be allowed to take her to his own home until she was thirty years of age, and at present she was only fifteen. He warned the prince that if the sun were to shine upon her before she was thirty, she would become the property of the goblins, and he, the king, had promised her mother to watch over her until that time. The foreign prince agreed to this condition, and the princess was sent for,

to see the wooer. She promised to give him her answer within three days, and, waiting till the end of the third day, she then said that if her father wished it, she would marry the English prince, whom she knew, of course, to be the falcon. The matter was settled accordingly, and first the betrothal was held, and then the marriage, and these ceremonies were celebrated with many festivities and entertainments.

One day the whole party had gone on a visit to another royal castle, where a tournament took place; but the bridal couple stayed at home, for the poor princess, alas! dared not leave her rooms owing to that terrible prophecy. It was a dull day, and rain was threatening, so the prince suggested to his young bride that there could surely be no danger if they drove to the castle also and saw all the splendour. The princess, of course, was only too glad to see something more than this view from her northern windows, so they drove away and joined the rest of the party. Scarcely had they reached the castle and taken their seats at the open-air entertainment, when the sun broke forth for a moment, and a sunbeam fell on the princess as she was sitting beside her bridegroom. At the same moment he felt her snatched away from him, and could not see her anywhere.

"Oh, if I were only a dog now!" he thought, and his silent wish was fulfilled instantly. In the form of a dog he ran away hard on the scent of his beloved bride. There was great grief among the assembled guests. They dispersed to their homes, and the king retired to

his rooms, refusing to be comforted or to see anyone. After he had succeeded in protecting his daughter from the awful prophecy during so many years, one single moment had wrought wretchedness and misery to his house!

Meanwhile the dog pursued the track of the lost one and was drawn far, far away into a wild desert, until he lost the scent at the foot of a mountain. He leapt to the right and the left, he ran up and down, but the traces led no further. The princess must have been taken inside the mountain; yet there was neither gate nor door to be seen. Then the dog transformed himself into an ant and began to search for an entrance into the mountain. Hours and even days passed while the ant crawled up and down, in and out of all the holes and crevices which were along the sides of the mountain. At last it came to a small gap which it followed farther and farther into the mountain, until this gap grew to a large cave forming a sort of outer court to a large castle within the mountain. The ant crept on and on, through long passages and up many stairs, through one room after another, until it came to a room in which hung a burning lamp, and there the princess was sitting, her eyes wet with tears. She was not alone for the wicked goblin was there also; sitting at her feet with his ugly head in her lap, and she was forced to comb his hair while he rested and slept.

The ant ran into the room and crawled up the princess until it was close to her ear, when it whispered to her: "I am near you, your dearest friend." The princess

started, but recognized its voice at once, besides, she knew that her falcon could change into an ant. Then it whispered to her: "All may yet be well. Just ask the goblin how long you are to remain here." Then she dropped her hands and ceased combing the goblin's hair. He woke up and asked: "Why do you stop?" "Oh, I was thinking," she said. "Indeed! What were you thinking about?" asked the goblin. "I was wondering whether I am to remain here all my life," said the princess. "Yes certainly," said the goblin, "I shall not set you free as long as I live. Just go on with your work."

Then the princess drew the comb through his hair, and the goblin fell asleep. The ant whispered: "Ask some more questions!" She let her hands drop, and the goblin awoke once more and said: "Go on, or are you thinking again?" "Yes," said the princess, "I was wondering how long your life would last." "Oh, is that it? My life will last longer than yours, and nobody can rob me of it, because it is in my heart, and that I do not carry about with me: it is in safe keeping. So just go on with your work, and stop your foolish thinking!" And so she had to begin combing his hair again, and the goblin fell asleep once more.

"Ask another question!" said the ant. Then the princess let fall her hands again, and the goblin awoke. This time he was very angry at being disturbed in his sweet sleep. "A plague on your thinking!" he said; "what have you been considering this time?" "It is your own fault that I am compelled to think so much;

you tell me you have a heart, but that you do not carry it about with you. I cannot understand that. Where is it? "It would not help you if you knew," said the goblin, "but as it would not do you any harm either, I may as well tell you. It is far from here in a country called Poland. In that land is a big lake and in the lake is a dragon; inside the dragon is a hare, inside the hare is a duck, inside the duck is an egg and inside that egg is my heart. It is well hidden, and nobody will think of looking for it there. Now I have given you something to think about, but if you do not go on with your work at once, I will punish you severely. You understand me?" The princess hastened to begin combing again, and the goblin fell asleep, and was soon snoring so loudly that the whole mountain trembled.

The ant whispered again to the princess and told her to be of good cheer, as he would soon release her from her bondage, and then he crawled as quickly as he could out of the room and out of the mountain, changed into a falcon and flew away to Poland. There he settled down by the side of a big lake and changed himself into a human being again. It was evening when he arrived there and he looked all around, but could see nothing of the dragon. All he saw was a small house standing quite alone, and he went to it and asked the people who lived in it whether he might stay the night there. They told him that they were only poor folk, and had no room worthy of such a fine gentleman, but they were quite willing to let him sit down and rest.

Next morning he rose very early and went at once out-

side the house, where he saw twelve fat pigs lying in a stye. "Well," he said to his host when he came in again, "you are not so poor as you pretend; I see you have twelve fine pigs in your stye." "Oh, dear me no!" said the man, "we are not so rich as to possess twelve pigs. They are for the breakfast of the dragon, that lives out yonder in the lake. He threatens to devastate the whole country, if the king does not give him twelve fat pigs every day. They are brought here at nightfall, and it is my duty to drive them to the shore every morning. But now there are hardly any pigs in the country, and when these are eaten, it will fare badly with all of us." "I will go with you," said the prince. "Oh, no," said the man, "that will never do. If he sees a stranger, he will tear us both to pieces." But the prince insisted on accompanying the man, so they set out together, and drove the pigs to the shore of the lake. They had not gone very far when they heard a crashing and roaring, and saw the dragon rolling ashore to get his breakfast.

"Oh, if I were a bear now!" thought the prince, and at once he was changed into one. The dragon roared: "Come along with my pigs!" but the bear replied: "You will have to take me instead." He flung himself upon the dragon, and they scratched and bit and fought for a long time with their claws and teeth, but neither could get the better of the other. "If I had only eaten those twelve fat pigs," said the dragon, "I would soon have settled you." "Well, if I had taken a bite of bread and a sip of wine, you would not have

lived very long," retorted the prince. They were so tired now that they could fight no longer, and the dragon rolled back into the lake and disappeared, but the bear assumed human shape again and said to the man : "You may drive the pigs back again to the sty ; the dragon does not want any breakfast to-day."

But as he himself wanted something to eat, he went into the king's capital, which was not far off, and refreshed himself with food and drink during the day, and slept well during the night, before setting out again next morning to the shores of the lake. He arrived just in time to see the man drive twenty-four pigs to the lake (for he owed the dragon twelve from the day before), and again they heard a crashing and roaring when the dragon came ashore. When he cried : "Come along with my pigs ! " he was not quite so impudent as he had been on the previous day.

The prince had turned into a bear again and he gave the dragon the same answer : "You will have to take me instead ! " They attacked each other again and tore and fought so that the ground shook under them. At last the dragon said : "If I had only eaten those twenty-four fat pigs I would soon have settled you," to which the bear replied : "Well, if I had only had a bite of bread and a sip of wine, you would not have lived very long." Then the dragon rolled back into the lake, and the bear assumed human shape again and returned to his inn.

The swineherd locked the twenty-four pigs in their sty and then went hastily to the town and told the king that

They scratched and bit and fought for a long time

the dragon had not received his pigs for the last two days, and that a terribly strong bear-man had attacked the dragon and fought with him until they were both unable to fight any more. He also repeated what the two animals had said when the fight was over. The king's son heard this ; he was only a boy but he was very venturesome, and he remarked that it was a shame nobody had given the bear bread and wine, as he had asked. He said no more, but he made up his mind what he was going to do.

Next morning the swineherd drove thirty-six pigs to the shore, for the king had commanded that it must be done and that the dragon must get his due, as long as they could procure it. The king was a coward and was afraid of the dragon. When the pigs came down to the shore the dragon appeared, and he swallowed one before the bear came in sight ; but soon he had other work to do, for the two began again to bite and to scratch and to pull each other about in a way that was terrible to behold. But neither could subdue the other. "If I only had those other thirty-five fat pigs inside me," said the dragon, "I would soon have settled you." "Well, if only I had eaten a bite of bread and drunk a sip of wine, you would not have lived very long," replied the bear, and at the same moment somebody handed a large wheaten loaf and a whole jug of wine into his small boat ; it was the bold little prince who had stolen near and who now gave the bear what he wanted. As soon as the bear had taken these refreshments he flew at the dragon again and tore him to

pieces, and then a hare darted out of the big dragon and ran to the woods, but at the same moment the bear changed into a dog, overtook the hare and killed it, when a duck flew out of the dead hare, but at the same moment instead of the dog there was a falcon on the spot, who tore the duck with beak and claws. Then the duck dropped an egg, and the falcon having watched where it fell, changed into a prince and had the egg in his hands in a moment. It had fallen on a big stone but its shell had remained untouched.

"It is very hard," said the prince, "but I know something that is still harder." Then he changed again to a falcon and flew back the whole way to the goblin's mountain. There the falcon changed into an ant and crawled through the crevice into the mountain, and when it had got into the large cave, it changed to a human being, holding the egg in his hand. Now he rushed through all the long passages, ran up the many stairs and hurried through the large halls until he reached the room where the lamp was burning and where the princess sat with the goblin's head in her lap. She heard him come, dropped the comb, and pressed her hands together in despair, for now it was surely a question of life and death for them both. The goblin started out of his slumber and grasped his huge bar of iron, but at the same moment Prince Falcon stood in the doorway and flung the egg right at the goblin's forehead, so that it broke in pieces and ran down over his face. At the same time the goblin fell backward struck his head on the stone floor and died instantly.

Just as this happened, the whole mountain burst asunder from top to bottom, and the prince and princess found themselves standing on the balcony of one of the most beautiful castles you could imagine. All the rooms were full of gold and silver and precious stones, and the land round about the castle was no longer a desert, but a huge park with lovely gardens and flowers and trees. The spell was broken now, and everything was again as it had been before the goblin bewitched it. The young couple set out on their way to the princess's father, and his joy at their safe return was beyond all bounds: All the marriage guests were invited again, and a new wedding was held ; the king presented his son-in-law with the half of his kingdom, but the young couple took up their residence in the magnificent castle that had belonged to the goblin. The old king now had new windows put into his castle, to the east, the west, and the south as well as to the north. He lived long enough to enjoy the company of many grandchildren and when he died, the cobbler's lad became king of Spain.

The Raven of Salby

THERE once lived a woman who had an only son; he was so lazy that he would not do the least thing for himself, and his mother had to do everything for him. One day he was looking out of the window, when he saw a big raven perched on an apple-tree and picking at the apples. This annoyed the boy so much that he actually put himself to the trouble of taking a gun from the wall and firing at the raven. He seemed to hit it, for the bird dropped a short distance; so the boy fired again, and the raven dropped a little lower, and when he fired for the third time, the bird fell to the ground and lay there as if dead.

Now the boy went out into the garden to the raven, but he was too lazy to stoop down and pick it up, so he dropped flat on the ground. At the same moment the raven rose up, spread out its broad wings, seized the boy, and flew with him high into the air. The boy was forced to cling to the raven's neck while the flight continued, and so they flew far out over the sea. Here the raven suddenly swooped downward, so that the boy's legs became immersed in the water. "Oh dear," cried the boy, "I thought I was dead." "So did I, when you fired at me the first time," said the raven. And then he rose into the air again, up to the clouds, and flew farther and farther over the wild sea. Then he suddenly swooped down again so that the boy became immersed up to his chin. "Oh dear,

I really thought I was killed this time," cried the boy. " So did I," said the raven, " when you fired at me the second time. Then he rose up again and flew ever so much farther out over the sea, until he suddenly dropped into it, and the waves broke over the boy's head. " Oh dear, this time I thought it really was all over," cried the boy. " So did I," said the raven, " when you fired at me a third time." Now he rose again high into the air and flew farther and farther, first over the sea and then over the land, until they came to a lonely farmhouse. There he flew to the ground, and, setting the boy down in a field, told him to go into the house, give greetings from the Raven of Salby, and tell the people to give him a bowlful of porridge with twelve lumps of butter in it. He was then to eat twelve spoonfuls of it, dipping each of them into a lump of butter, and for every spoonful that he ate he would get the strength of a man. If the people of the house asked him for news, he was to be silent, pretending that he did not know any. When he had finished the porridge he was to go outside and look for the raven; if he did not see it, he would probably notice a little white rag with a red thread floating in the air. This he was to follow, and then he would find the raven.

The boy did as the raven told him; he went to the farmhouse, delivered the raven's message, and, after having eaten the twelve spoonfuls of porridge, he found that he had the strength of twelve men. The people of the farm asked him all kinds of questions, but he

remained silent and went outside to look for the raven, who was nowhere in sight. Then he saw a white rag with a red thread floating in the air, and, after following it for some time, he came at last upon the raven, who took him again on his back and flew far away with him until they came to a large mansion. There the raven set him down and sent him in with the same message from the Raven of Salby. The boy again received a bowl of porridge with twelve butter balls, and again gained the strength of twelve men ; he was again silent when questioned, and again he found the raven by following the white rag with a red thread. Then the raven flew farther away with him to a great castle, which the boy entered. He delivered the message of the raven, and again received porridge and twelve butter balls, so that he now possessed the strength of thirty-six men. When he left the castle he could not see the raven, but only the white rag with the red thread, which he followed again. This time the way went up a steep hill, but when the boy came to the top of the hill and saw the rag and the thread a long way off, he was too lazy to descend the hill, and so, lying on the ground, he let himself roll down the hill. He knocked against so many stones and stumps of trees, that when he reached the bottom of the hill he felt too sore and bruised to get up, and cried aloud to the raven to come and help him. The raven came flying along and took him on his back, but first he gave him a good beating with his wings, because he had again given way to his old laziness.

The raven now flew with him far, far away over land and sea, until they saw a great royal castle in the distance. There the raven set him down and said to him: "You must go into this palace and be hired as kitchen-boy. Take care not to miss the road to the castle, and if ever you get into any danger from which you cannot free yourself, call out the words: 'Raven of Salby, help me now, I am in great danger!'" When the raven had said this, he rose on his broad pinions so high into the air, that he was soon out of sight.

When the lad was alone he thought: "The raven certainly told me to follow the high road to the castle, but I see that it has many turnings and is at least twelve miles long; while if I go right across country, it is only about a mile; I should be a fool if I did not take the nearest way." Accordingly he walked straight in front of him, but this short cut was a wrong way altogether, and he soon found himself in a bottomless bog sticking fast among sharp prickly thorns, so that he could move neither forward nor backward. Then he cried: "Raven of Salby, help me now, I am in great danger!" The raven came whizzing along through the air, seized the boy in his claws, and gave him a thorough pulling about among the thorns, telling him that this was his punishment for wilfulness. Then he put him down again in the former place and soared up into the air. Now the boy had became wiser, and followed the high road until he came to the castle. There he went into the kitchen and asked to be taken into service as kitchen-boy, and as there was a vacancy for a lad to

help in the kitchen, the head cook engaged him, and made him carry water and wood. As he possessed such great strength, he could do the work quite easily.
Matters were just then in a very bad condition at the castle, for some time before when there had been a great scarcity of water, the king had promised his daughter to the sea-god who had helped him in his need. Now the sea-god had come to claim his reward, and had threatened to destroy the whole kingdom, unless the princess were sent to the seashore the next day. There was great mourning throughout the land, and grief beyond compare, and the king offered his daughter and half his kingdom to anyone who would help him, so that he need not fulfil his promise to the sea-god. There was now a distinguished knight staying at the castle, called the Red Knight, and he had promised faithfully to fight with the sea-god and to save the princess. Next morning, the knight accompanied the princess to the seashore, but as soon as he saw a great wave dashing in from the sea, he thought it was the sea-god and he ran to the woods where he climbed up a tree from sheer fright, leaving the princess to her fate.
The kitchen-boy who happened to be strolling along the seashore at the time, had also seen the great wave, which had caused The Red Knight to run away, but he stood still and watched. He waited till the wave broke and surged ashore, but there was no sea-god in it ; the wave merely wetted the feet of the princess and then rolled back. A second wave came rolling in,

much larger than the first and wetted the princess up to the waist, but again it contained no sea-god. As soon as the second wave had vanished, there came a third one as high as a house and broke over the princess's head, and in this wave was the sea-god. He was just about to seize the princess, when the kitchen-boy rushed at him and seized him, and now the two wrestled with each other by the seashore so that the sand flew mountain high around them. The lad did, indeed, require all the strength of the thirty-six men that he luckily possessed, but in the end he gained the victory and killed the sea-god, whose dead body the waves carried back to the sea.

After this fight the lad was so tired that he dropped down on the shore and fell into a deep sleep. Then the princess walked up to him, twined a ring of gold into his hair and then ran back to the castle to bring her father the good news of her rescue. But when she came to the forest, the Red Knight climbed down from his tree, stopped her and threatened her with death, if she did not confirm his statement that he and no one else had saved her from the sea-god. They went together to the castle, where the knight told a long story of his prowess ; how he had killed the sea-god and saved the king's daughter. There was great rejoicing all through the castle, and it was arranged that the princess should marry the knight in a week and should receive half the kingdom as dowry.

The wedding day arrived and numbers of guests came to the castle, while the splendour excelled anything ever

seen before at a royal wedding. When the whole party was seated at the wedding banquet, the princess rose and said that she did not know who had saved her and killed the sea-god, but she knew that she had twined a ring of gold into the hair of her deliverer while he was lying asleep on the shore after his hard struggle; therefore she would marry none other than the man who possessed that ring. That was very awkward for the Red Knight, because he had not that ring, and the king sent an order throughout his kingdom that all the men of the country were to come to the castle, so that he who had the ring might be found. They came in their thousands, but none of them could show the ring.

Then the king grew very angry and said that the princess must have invented the story of the ring, but she insisted that it was true, and that there must be one who had not been brought before the king. Then some one remembered that there was a big lad in the kitchen, whom they had not fetched, and the king sent at once two of the strongest servants to bring him, whether he was willing to come or not. They went to him and told him that the king wished to see him at once, but the lad replied that he had nothing to do with the king, and that if the king wished to see him he could come to him. Then the servants seized him and tried to drag him away by force, but they had tackled the wrong man, for he was too strong for them and knocked them over like ninepins. When they were on their feet again, they ran quickly to the king and told him that the kitchen-boy refused to come and that they were not able to

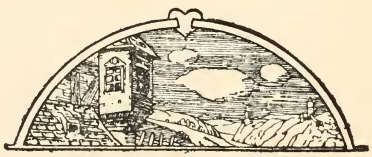
The princess twined a ring of gold into his hair

bring him. Then the king sent ten of his strongest men to fetch him, but they fared no better, nor was it any good when the king sent twenty-four of his strongest men; to them also the lad said that if the king wanted to see him, he could come to him. When they attempted to use force, he knocked two and two of them together and threw them head first out of the door. There was nothing left now, but for the king to be his own servant, and to ask the lad very politely to accompany him into the banqueting-hall. The lad did as requested, but when he came upstairs, he still wore his white cap on his head. The king asked him courteously to take it off for a moment, and as soon as he did that, everybody saw the gold ring of the princess glittering in his hair. "Is it you who rescued my daughter from the sea-god?" asked the king. "Yes, Sire," replied the boy. "How were you able to do that?" questioned the king, astonished. "Because I have the strength of thirty-six men," replied the lad, simply, "and there is only one stronger than myself, and that is the Raven of Salby, who has the strength of thirty-seven." "Yes," said the princess, "it was he, and no other, who fought with the sea-god and saved my life, while the Red Knight sat on a tree in the woods, where he had run when the sea-god came out of the sea."

Then the king turned to his servants and said: "Seize that false knight and hang him on the highest tree in the forest, where he hid when he should have protected the princess!" But to the lad as due reward, he offered his daughter in marriage, as well as half his kingdom.

The lad thanked him for his kind offer, but said that as he had not yet thought of marrying and settling down, he wanted neither the princess nor the kingdom, but preferred to serve the king a little longer.

Then the king made him commander of his army, and he received great pay and as many suits of clothes and weapons and horses as he liked, and served the king for some time. When he rode along the streets every one whom he met went out of his way, because they all knew that he possessed the strength of thirty-six men and they were afraid of him. At last one day he met another horseman who did not go out of his way, but rode straight up to him, and, when they met, the strange horseman laid his hand on the lad's shoulder so firmly that his horse collapsed entirely and he himself sank to his knees. Then he knew that he had found his master and he exclaimed: "Raven of Salby, help me now, for I am in sore trouble!" "Nay, you need no help." answered the raven for it was he who had stopped the lad. Now he made himself known to him and took him home to his own castle and kingdom, where the lad married the raven's sister and I believe they are still living in splendour and happiness.



The Most Obedient Wife

LONG ago there was a rich farmer who had three daughters, all grown up and marriageable, and all three very pretty. The eldest of them was the prettiest, and she was also the cleverest, but she was so quarrelsome and obstinate, that there was never any peace in the house. She constantly contradicted her father, who was a kind, peace-loving man, and she quarrelled with her sisters, although they were very good-natured girls.

Many wooers came to the farm, and one of them wished to marry the eldest daughter. The farmer said that he had no objection to him as a son-in-law, but at the same time he thought it his duty to tell the suitor the truth. Accordingly he warned him that his eldest daughter was so violent and strong-minded that no one could live in peace with her. As some compensation for these faults, she would receive three hundred pounds more in her dowry than would her two sisters. That was, of course, very attractive, but the young man thought over the matter and, after he had been visiting the house for some time, he altered his mind and asked for the hand of the second daughter. The daughter accepted him, and, as her father was willing, the two became man and wife and lived very happily together.

Then came another wooer, from another part of the country, and he also wanted to marry the eldest daughter. The father warned him, as he had cautioned the first wooer; telling him that she would receive three

hundred pounds more than her youngest sister, but that he must be careful, for she was so stubborn and quarrelsome that nobody could live in peace with her. So the second wooer changed his mind and asked for the hand of the youngest daughter. They married shortly after and lived happily and peacefully together.

The eldest sister was now alone with her father, but she did not treat him any better than before, and grew even more ill-humoured because her two sisters had found favour in the eyes of the first two wooers. She was obstinate and quarrelsome, violent and bad-tempered, and she grew more so from day to day.

At last another wooer came, and he was neither from their own district nor even from their country, but from a distant land. He went to the farmer and asked for the hand of his eldest daughter. "I do not want her to marry at all," said the father, "it would be a shame to allow her to do so ; she is so ill-tempered and violent that no human being could live in peace with her and I do not want to be the cause of such unhappiness." But the wooer remained firm ; he wanted her, he said, whatever her faults might be. At length the father yielded, provided that his daughter were willing to marry the young man, for, after all, he would be glad to get rid of her, and as he had told the suitor the whole truth about her, his conscience was clear. Accordingly the young man wooed the girl, and she did not hesitate long, but accepted the offer, for she was tired of sitting at home a despised and spurned spinster.

The wooer said that he had no time to remain with

them just then, as he must return home at once, and, as soon as the wedding-day was fixed, he rode away. He also told them not to wait for him at the farm on the day of the wedding, he would appear in good time at the church. When the day came the farmer drove with his daughter to the church, where a great company of wedding guests had assembled ; the bride's sisters and brothers-in-law were there, and all the village people arrived in their Sunday clothes. The bridegroom was there also, but in ordinary travelling garments ; and so the couple walked up to the altar and were married.

As soon as the ceremony was over, the bridegroom took his young wife by the hand and led her out of the church. He sent a message to his father-in-law asking him to excuse their absence from the marriage feast, as they had no time to waste. He had not driven in a coach, as is the custom at weddings, but travelled on horseback, on a fine big grey horse, with an ordinary saddle, and a couple of pistols in the saddlebags. He had brought no friends or relations with him, only a big dog, that lay beside the horse during the ceremony. The bridegroom lifted his bride on to the pommel, as if she had been a feather, jumped into the saddle, put the spurs to his horse and rode off with the dog trotting behind. The marriage party standing at the church door looked after them, and shook their heads in amazement. Then they got into their carriages, drove back to the house, and partook of the marriage feast without bride or bridegroom.

The bride did not like this at all, but as she did not

want to quarrel with her bridegroom so soon, she held her tongue for a time ; but as he did not speak either, she at last broke the ice and said that it was a very fine horse they were riding. "Yes," he replied ; "I have seven other horses at home in my stables, but this is my favourite ; it is the most valuable of all, and I like it best." Then she remarked that she liked the beautiful dog also. "It is indeed a jewel of a dog," he said, "and has cost me a lot of money."

After a while they came to a forest, where the bridegroom sprang from his horse and cut a thin switch from a willow-tree. This he wound three times round his finger, then tied it with a thread and gave it to his bride, saying : "This is my wedding gift to you. Take good care of it, and carry it about you always ! You will not repent it." She thought it a strange wedding gift, but put it in her pocket, and they rode on again. Presently the bride dropped her glove, and the bridegroom said to the dog : "Pick it up, Fido !" But the dog took no notice, and left the glove on the ground. Then his master drew his pistol from the holster, shot the dog, and rode on, leaving it lying dead. "How could you be so cruel ?" said his bride. "I never say a thing twice," was the reply, and they journeyed on in silence.

After some time they came to a running stream that they had to cross. There being only a ford, and no bridge, the man said to his horse : "Take good care ! Not a drop must soil my bride's dress !" When they had crossed, however, the dress was badly soiled, and

the husband lifted his bride from the horse, drew out the other pistol and shot the horse, so that it fell dead to the ground. "Oh, the poor horse!" cried the bride. "Yes, but I never say a thing twice," answered her husband. Then he took saddle, bridle, and cover from the horse; bridle and cover he carried himself, but the saddle he gave to his young wife, and said: "You can carry that; we shall soon be home." He walked on in silence, and the bride quickly put the saddle on her back and followed him; she had no desire to make him say it twice.

Soon they arrived at his dwelling place, a very fine farm. The menservants and maidservants rushed to the door and received them, and the husband said to them: "See, this is my wife and your mistress. Whatever she tells you, you are to do, just as if I had ordered it." Then he led her indoors and showed her everything—living-rooms and bedrooms, kitchen and cellar, brewhouse and dairy—and said to her: "You will look after everything indoors, I attend to everything out-of-doors," and then they sat down to supper, and soon after went to bed.

Days, weeks and months passed; the young wife attended to all household matters while her husband looked after the farm, and not a single angry word passed between them. The servants had been accustomed to obey their master implicitly, and now they obeyed their mistress likewise, and so six months passed without there having arisen any necessity for the husband to say the same thing twice to his wife. He

was always kind and polite to her, and she was always gentle and obedient.

One day he said to her: "Would you not like to visit your relations?" "Yes, dear husband, I should like to do so very much, if it is convenient," she replied. "It is quite convenient," he said, "but you have never mentioned it. It shall be done at once; get ready, while I have the horses put to the carriage." He went to the stable and saw to everything, while his wife ran upstairs to dress as quickly as possible for the journey. The husband drove up, cracked his whip and asked: "Are you ready?" "Yes, dear," came the reply, and she came running out and entered the carriage. She had not quite finished dressing and carried some of her things in her hand, and these she put on in the carriage.

Then they started. When they had driven nearly half the distance, they saw a great flock of ravens flying across the road. "What beautiful white birds!" said the husband. "No, they are black, dear!" said his wife. "I think it is going to rain," he said, turned the horses, and drove home again. She understood perfectly why he had done so; it was the first time that she had contradicted him, but she showed no resentment, and the two conversed in quite a friendly fashion all the way home. The horses were put into the stable—and it did not rain.

When a month had passed, the husband said one morning: "I believe it is going to be fine to-day. Would you not like to visit your relations?" She wished to do so very much indeed, and she hastened a little more

than the last time, so that when her husband drove up and cracked his whip, she was quite ready and mounted the carriage beside him. They had driven considerably more than half the distance, when they met a large flock of sheep and lambs. "What a fine pack of wolves!" said the husband. "You mean sheep, dear!" said the wife. "I think it will rain before evening," said the husband, looking up at the sky. "It will be better for us to drive home again." With these words he turned the horses and drove back home. They conversed in a friendly manner until they reached home; but it did not rain.

When another month had passed, the husband said one morning to his wife: "We really must see whether we cannot manage to visit your relations. What do you say to our driving across to-day? It looks as though the day would be fine." His wife thought so too; she was ready very soon and they set out. They had not travelled far when they saw a great flock of swans flying along over their heads. "That was a fine flock of storks," said the husband. "Yes, so it was, dear," said his wife, and they drove on; there was no change in the weather that day, so that they reached her father's farm in due course. He received them joyfully and sent at once for his two other daughters and their husbands, and a very merry family meeting it was.

The three married sisters went into the kitchen together, because they could talk more freely there, and they had a great deal to tell each other; the two younger ones in particular had many questions to ask their elder sister,

because they had not seen her for a very long time. Then they helped to prepare the dinner: it goes without saying that nothing was too good for this festive occasion.

The three brothers-in-law sat meanwhile with their father-in-law in the sitting-room and they, too, had much to tell and ask each other. Then said the old farmer: "This is the first time that you have all three been gathered together under my roof, and I should like to ask you frankly how you are pleased with your wives." The husbands who had married the two younger, good-tempered sisters said at once that they were perfectly satisfied and lived very happily. "But how do you get on with yours?" the father-in-law asked the husband of the eldest sister. "Nobody ever married a better wife than I did," was the reply. "Well, I should like to see which of you has the most obedient wife," said the father-in-law, and then he fetched a heavy silver jug and filled it to the top with gold and silver coins. This he placed in the middle of the table before the three men, and said that he would give it to him who had the most obedient wife.

They put the matter to the test at once. The husband who had married the youngest sister went to the kitchen door and called: "Will you come here a moment, Gerda, please; as quickly as possible!" "All right, I am coming," she answered, but it was some time before she came, because as she explained, she had first to talk about something with one of her sisters. "What do you want with me?" she asked. The husband made some excuse, and she went out again.

Now it was the turn of the man who had married the middle sister. "Please come here a moment, Margaret!" he called. She also answered: "Yes, I am coming at once," but it was a good while before she came; she had had something in her hands and was compelled to put it down first. The husband invented some excuse, and she went out again.

Then the third husband went to the kitchen door, opened it slightly and just said: "Christine!"—"Yes!" she answered, as she stood there with a large dish of food in her hands. "Take this from me!" she said quickly to her sisters, but they looked at her in amazement and did not take the dish. Bang! she dropped it right on the middle of the kitchen floor, rushed into the room and asked: What do you wish, dear?"—"Oh, I only wanted to see you," he said, "but since you are here, you may as well take that jug standing on the table; it is yours, with all that is in it.—You might also show us what you got from me as a marriage gift on our wedding day."—"Yes, dear, here it is," she said, and drew the willow ring from her bosom, where she had kept it ever since. The husband handed it to his father-in-law and asked: "Can you put that ring straight?" —No, that was impossible without breaking it. "Well, you see now," said the husband, "if I had not bent the twig when it was green, I could not have made it into this shape."

After that they sat down to a merry meal, then the husband of the oldest sister returned home with her, and they lived for many years very happily together.

Virtue Its Own Reward

THERE was once a man who went to the forest for firewood. He walked about a long time and looked at one tree after the other, but they were all too good for his purpose; they would make fine timber if they were allowed to grow. At last he found a tree which was more suitable, as it was crooked and withered, and he began to cut it down.

Then he heard some one saying to him: "Help me, good friend, and set me free!" He looked to find out who it might be, and he saw a large viper tightly wedged in a crevice of the tree and unable to free itself. "No, I will not help you," said the man, "you would be sure to sting me." The viper replied that it would not hurt him, if he would only set it free, so the man slipped his axe very carefully into the crevice below the viper, so that it could get out. But no sooner was it at liberty than it curled itself up, showed its poisoned fangs, and threatened to sting him.

"Did I not tell you," said the man, "that you were an evil creature, and would repay good with evil!" "Oh," answered the viper, "it is all very well for you to talk, but is it not the way of the world, that good deeds are ill requited?" "I don't believe that," said the man, "good deeds reap their own reward." "You are wrong there," said the viper, "I know better what happens in the world." "Let us ask somebody else," suggested the man. "Oh, very well!" replied the

he saw a large viper tightly wedged in a crevice of the tree

viper, and, as it would not leave him, the man had to go through the forest with it, until they met a worn-out old horse grazing in a meadow. It was quite lame and its back was sore from the hard saddle ; in one eye it was blind, and there were hardly any teeth left in its mouth.

To this animal they put the question, whether good deeds were well rewarded in this world or not. "They are indeed very badly rewarded," said the horse. "I have served my master faithfully for twenty years, carried him on my back and drawn his carriage, have carefully watched every step so that I might not stumble and cause him injury. So long as I was young and strong I had a good time, was well fed and watered and groomed, had a comfortable stable, and always clean straw ; but now that I have grown old and weak, I work in the treadmill, and am left out here day and night in all sorts of weather and get no food but what I can find for myself. No, no, good deeds are very ill-requited." "Did I not tell you so ? " said the viper, "and now I will sting you." "Oh ! no," said the man, "do wait another moment ! here comes old Reynard the fox ; let us ask his opinion." Reynard came trotting along, stopped and looked at them ; he could see quite well that the man was in a bad fix. Then the viper asked him whether it was a fact that good deeds were badly rewarded, or whether he thought that they were sometimes well rewarded. "Say well ! " whispered the man, "and I will give you two fat geese." The viper did not hear what the man had said, but the fox did,

and he replied : " Good deeds are well rewarded," and at the same moment he leaped at the viper and bit it in the neck so that it fell to the ground. But before dying it had time to say : " No ; good deeds are ill-requited. I have just had proof of that, for I have spared the man's life and lost my own."

Now the viper was dead and the man was free. He said to the fox : " Come home with me and get your geese." " No, thank you," said Reynard, " I am not going to the village, because you would set your dogs at me." " Very well, then, wait here until I bring them to you ! " said the man, and he ran home to his wife and said to her hastily : " Be quick, wife, and put two fat geese into a sack ; I have promised them to Reynard for his breakfast." The wife did take a sack and put something into it. It was not geese, however, but two fierce little terriers. Then the man ran with the sack to the fox and said : " Here is the reward that I promised you." " Thanks," said the fox, " I did speak the truth, after all, when I said that good deeds are well rewarded." Saying this he took the sack on his back and ran off to his lair. " These geese are really heavy," said the fox, as he sat down and bit through the string of the sack with his sharp teeth, and prepared to enjoy his meal. At that moment the two dogs darted out of the sack and leaped at his throat, and, as he could not shake them off they worried him to death. Before he died he had just time to say : " It was a lie, after all, for good deeds are indeed ill-requited."

Faithful Svend

ONCE a father and a mother had a son who was called Svend, and this son was very anxious to go out into the world and earn his own living. When he left home, his father gave him the parting advice that he should always laugh with those who laughed, weep with those who wept, be cheerful with those who were cheerful, and mourn with those who mourned; while his mother added that he should never pass a church without entering and asking for God's blessing on his way.

After some time Svend became a servant in a large mansion, and his master and mistress were so pleased with him that he rose from one post to another and soon became their most trusted and confidential servant. This, of course, made his fellow-servants very jealous, and among them was one who never let an opportunity pass of speaking ill of him. He advised his master to watch Svend, because, whenever the mistress of the house was laughing, Svend laughed too; when she wept, he did likewise; when she was cheerful, Svend also was cheerful; and when she was sad, he was very sad indeed. This turned out to be true, for, when the master watched, he noticed all these things, and he began to think evil of Svend. He grew more and more suspicious and angry with his trusted servant, and at last resolved to get rid of him. He dispatched him with a message to the brickworks which were on his estate,

but first he sent word to the brickworks that the first man who came with a message from him, should be seized and thrown into the fiery kiln.
Svend did as he was told and set out at once on his errand, but on the way he passed a church, and, as he remembered his mother's injunction, he entered in order to ask the Lord's blessing on his way. In the meantime his wicked fellow-servant, who had slandered him to his master, went to the brickworks in order to see that Svend had indeed been thrown into the kiln. But he did not enter the church, and so it happened that he came first to the brickworks, was seized by the men and thrown into the kiln. Svend, after spending some time in the church, delivered his message and returned home unharmed, without having the least suspicion of what had happened and from what terrible fate he had escaped. His master was greatly astonished when he saw him return, and asked him whether he had carried out his instructions and had gone straight to the brickworks, as he had been told. Svend confessed that he had gone into a church on the way, as he had promised his mother, and he related at the same time all the wise counsels that his father and mother had given him. Then his master understood that Svend was indeed a faithful and honest servant, and that his slanderer had received a well-merited punishment.
Henceforth his master never called him anything but his faithful Svend, and he grew daily more convinced that he could rely upon him in everything. Now it happened one day that the owner of a neighbouring

estate came to the house, and commenced talking about the dishonesty of servants. He said that there was no such thing as a servant upon whom one could rely entirely, that they were all rogues, and truthful only when it suited their own purpose. His host, however, said that he had a servant, his faithful Svend, who had never told him a lie, and never would do so, whether it was for his benefit or not. The visitor replied that he could easily induce him to be dishonest, and the two made a wager, each staking his estate.

Svend was sent for and told to take a letter to the visitor's wife. He was given one of his master's best suits of clothes and his best horse, and then he rode forth, being told to return the next evening. In the letter which he was to deliver full instructions were given as to his reception, and he was therefore received like a high-born gentleman. His horse was led to the stable, and he was made to sit down and dine with her ladyship. She clinked glasses with him and drank to his health, and others around the table did the same, and did not cease until Svend was completely dazed. Then cards were brought out, and he was compelled to join in a game, and after a time they said that he had lost all the money he brought with him, and the fine clothes that his master had given him, as well as his beautiful horse. Then they undressed him and put him to bed, and it was not till late the next day that he recovered from his stupor.

As he had gambled away the clothes in which he had come, likewise his horse, they dressed him in miserable

rags, put a stick into his hand, and turned him out. In this wretched state he was compelled to set out on his way back, but, try as he might, he could not get home that evening.

Faithful Svend, of course, was very wretched, and while he was stumbling along he felt that it would be quite impossible to tell his master how badly he had carried out his commission. He could well imagine that his master would question him closely, and he was at his wits' ends what to answer. When he saw the house not far off, he stopped and rehearsed the scene that was awaiting him. He planted his stick into the ground, hung his tattered hat on it, and said: "Now, you shall be my master." Then he walked a few steps backward, and, imitating his master, said: "Welcome, faithful Svend!" "Thank you, sir!" "But what has happened to you? Where are your clothes, and what have you done with my horse?" "Oh, sir, I have lost them. Robbers attacked me in the forest and took horse and clothes from me, and I have saved nothing but my life." He imagined he saw the hat shaking in disapproval, whether owing to the wind or from some other cause, he could not say, but he felt that his explanation would not do. He knew that his master would send out in all directions to catch the robbers, but, of course, they would not be found, nor could he produce any witness of the attack.

Then again he went a few steps back and began in this way: "Welcome, faithful Svend!" "Thank you, gracious master!" "But what has happened to you?

Where are your clothes, and what have you done with my horse?" "I lost my way and wandered on to a moor, where my horse sank into a bog, and I was just in time to leap down and save my life." No, it would not do; he distinctly saw the hat shake again, and he remembered that if he said this, search would be made for the horse, and besides his master would declare that some of the clothes would surely still be there. No, that story would not do!

Then he stepped back again a few steps, turned toward the stick and began as follows: "Welcome, faithful Svend!" "Thanks, gracious sir!" "But what has happened to you? Where are your clothes, and what have you done with my horse?"

Now he answered:

"*Hot was the air, and strong was the mead,*
That's how I lost both garments and steed."

Then it seemed as if the hat was nodding a "yes" to him. "Yes, that's how it happened, and that shall be my tale," he said. He then put on the old hat, took his stick in his hand and set out at once for the house. He walked upstairs into his master's room, where he found the visitor also, but his master did not bid him a friendly welcome, nor did he call him faithful Svend. He addressed him in a gruff voice: "Wherever have you been, Svend? Have you gambled away my good clothes and my fine horse?" "Yes, sir," said faithful Svend,

"*Hot was the air, and strong was the mead,*
That's how I lost both garments and steed."

and then he told all that had happened, how he had taken too much wine, and had lost everything at cards. "You have won the game after all, faithful Svend!" said his master, "and now you shall be the owner of the estate to which we sent you yesterday; you have earned it by your truthfulness." So it happened that faithful Svend became a wealthy and respected squire, because he had always spoken the truth.

Health and Happiness

ONE Christmas-eve two poor tramps came to a farmhouse and asked for a night's shelter, but they were refused and told that there was no room in the house for such vagabonds. So they walked on until they came to a little hut where a poor crofter lived with his wife. They knocked and asked for a night's shelter, and they were told that if they would be satisfied with the meagre hospitality the poor couple could offer them, they were very welcome indeed.

The two strangers were very grateful and entered the little house. Now the wife whispered to her husband that it was surely fitting that they should entertain their guests suitably on Christmas-eve, and that they must kill their lamb for supper. The husband agreed and killed their one little lamb, so that there was a fine roast on the table when they sat down to supper. They all ate together, spending a very happy evening, and when bed-time came the poor man and his wife gave their own bed to the strangers, while they spread straw on the floor for themselves.

Next morning they all went to church together, and the poor people asked the wanderers to stay with them over Christmas. "We have plenty of good food in the house now, and you must help us to eat it," they said. The strangers thanked them and accepted their kind invitation. When they were about to depart, the visitors thanked their hosts warmly for all their kind-

ness, and regretted that they could offer them no payment in return, but the husband and wife replied that they had not invited them for the sake of reward. When the strangers were saying good-bye, one of them remarked : " But, by the way, had the lamb no horns ?" " Oh, yes," replied the man, " but they were of no use to us." " How many horns had the lamb ?" asked the stranger. " Two," replied the man, quite astonished at the question. " Then you may wish for two things," said the stranger, " and they shall be granted." The man said that they had no other wish than to have their daily bread here on earth, and after their death to enjoy the heavenly kingdom. " May God grant you that," said the stranger ; " in a year's time we shall visit you again"; and the two went away.

From that day on everything throve with the poor people in the most wonderful manner ; their only cow had fine calves, and their two sheep had eight strong lambs, while their sow had so many young ones that they could hardly count them ; but, above all, whatever they sowed and planted in their little field multiplied a hundredfold. Thus they grew more prosperous from day to day, and they were able to enlarge their little cottage and make it more cosy and comfortable. They looked forward with delight to the next Christmas, when the two strangers were to visit them again, for they knew quite well that it was to them that they owed their prosperity.

Their neighbours were greatly astonished at the prosperity that had come to the poor folk, and most

annoyed of all were the people in the farmhouse at which the two strangers had called first. When they learned that all the blessings showered on the poor couple were due to the good wishes of the two strangers, they became terribly envious. They said that all this prosperity really belonged to them, for the good wishes would have been theirs, had they only taken the travellers into their house. When they heard that the two strangers had promised to come back at Christmas time, they persuaded the poor couple to send them to their house as soon as they arrived.

In the gloaming of Christmas-eve, the two wanderers came as they had promised, and knocked at the door of the poor man's house. Both husband and wife went outside, greeted them heartily and thanked them for all the blessings their visit had brought them. The strangers asked whether they might again spend the night with them and celebrate the festival in their company. Nothing would give them more pleasure, said the man, but he had promised the owner of the farmhouse opposite to send them to him. The farmer was sorry that he had turned them away the previous year, and he was anxious to atone for his lack of hospitality. "Besides, you will be given much better entertainment there than you would get with us," added the man. "If you wish it," said the strangers, "we will go there to-night, but to-morrow morning we shall go to church with you." Then they went across to the farmhouse. The farmer and his wife, who had been watching for the strangers' arrival, came rushing out at once, led

them into their best room and made many profuse apologies for having refused them the year before. The farmer had caused a fat ox to be killed and a rich meal was put on the table ; there were soup and meat, and puddings, and plenty of beer and wine and fine old mead. The strangers were shown into a big bedroom in which were two large beds, with feather-mattresses and pillows as high as the ceiling.

Next morning the visitors rose early, and when the farm-people asked them to spend Christmas with them, they said they were obliged to leave ; they were going to church first and then they would continue their journey. The farmer immediately ordered his carriage to be made ready, for he would not allow his visitors to walk to church. When they were about to start, one of the strangers said that they did not know how to thank the farmer sufficiently for his great hospitality ; unfortunately they had no money to offer him. "But, by-the-way, had the ox no horns?" he continued. "Oh, yes, indeed he had," answered the man, who had heard from his poor neighbours of the farewell conversation that had taken place the previous year. "How many horns had he?" asked the stranger. The wife pulled her husband's sleeve and whispered : "Say 'four.'" Then the farmer said that the ox had had four horns. "Then you may choose four wishes," said the stranger, "and they shall be granted ; you may each have two." Then they got into the carriage, called at their poor friends' house and took them with them to church. The farmer, who had driven them

The horns appear on the old woman's head

himself, hurried home, so that he and his wife might decide upon the four wishes. They would now be able to get everything that their heart desired.

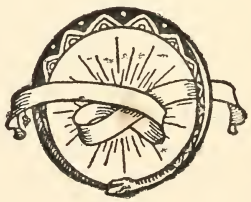
So eager was he to get home that he did not enter the church at all, but whipped up his horses and drove back at such speed that one of his horses stumbled and broke the reins. "Zounds!" he cried; then he jumped down and tied the reins together again. Scarcely had he started when the other horse fell. "I wish the witches had you both!" said the man, and behold! both his horses were gone, and he was left sitting in his carriage with the reins in his hand. There was nothing for him to do but leave the carriage in the road and continue his way on foot. One of the wishes had thus ended disastrously, but he did not mind that, for had he not three more wishes? He could wish himself as many horses as he liked, and all kinds of other things besides, he thought, as he walked cheerfully on his way.

Meanwhile his wife had been wandering about the house, eagerly awaiting her husband's return; she hoped that he would hurry home so that they could begin their wishing. At last she went outside to look for him, but, as she did not see him, she exclaimed: "Oh, I do wish that the slow-coach were here!" and behold! there he stood before her. "Oh, dear me!" she said, "I have wasted one of my wishes. But why have you arrived on foot, and what have you done with the horses and carriage?" "The horses are gone, and it is your fault," he replied, "I wished them to the witches. We should not have told the stranger that our ox had

four horns. It was you who advised me to do so ; I wish the two horns were stuck on your head !" and bang ! there they were.

Now three of their wishes were used. Only one was left, and it belonged to the wife. Then the husband began to coax her and said : " Dear wife ! Make good use of your last wish and wish us a great deal of money. Then all may yet come right." "No, thank you," replied his wife, "do you think I want to walk about all my life with these horns on my head ?"

Of course, she did not, so she wished the two horns would vanish, and they were gone at once. And so the farmer and his wife were not a whit the better for all their wishes, and had lost a couple of good horses into the bargain.



The School of Black Art

IN the same town there lived once upon a time a rich man who had two sons, and a poor man who had only one son. The three boys went to the same school and were very good friends. The poor boy, however, was the cleverest and most industrious of the three, and he had always to help the other two with their lessons, so that they might not fall behind. The boys grew up, and, when they were to be confirmed, the sons of the rich man begged their parents to buy for their poor friend a suit of clothes such as they themselves would wear at the ceremony, and this the father did gladly. The poor boy was to learn a trade, while the other two were to go to the university; but they said that they could never get on with their studies unless their friend was beside them; in fact, they could not do without his help and his company. So it came about that the rich man sent the poor boy to the university with his own sons.

The three now continued their studies together, and everything was between them as it had been before; they loved each other dearly, but the poor boy still showed the most capacity and the greatest industry, and continually assisted the other two. They lived in the same lodgings, and the two sons of the rich man shared everything with their poor friend, so that he could attend to his studies in comfort. At the end of three years they had learnt everything that the

university could offer them ; the poor boy had indeed finished his studies some time before the other two, but he remained with them until they finished also, and he helped them faithfully toward that end.

But, of course, there were many things yet to learn after they had left the university, and the poor lad could not rest as long as he knew that there were still other kinds of knowledge to acquire, and so the three agreed to remain together and to continue their studies. Their particular desire was to become learned in the black art, but to this the rich man objected, and he wrote to his sons that as he considered they had studied enough, he would not send them any more money. The sons, however, had some money left, and, disobeying their father, they went with their friend to another town where there was a school of black art.

There they inquired for the most learned magister, and, finding him, they asked whether he would accept them as pupils. He consented to do so, telling them that they could all three live in his own house, and that in one year he would teach them everything. One condition he made, which was that at the end of the year he would put three questions to them, and if they could answer these correctly, they would be at liberty to leave him without paying anything for their year's stay in his house. However, should one of them be unable to answer the question put to him, then he would have to remain with the magister for life and be a servant, with whom he could do as he liked. The three students

thought that they were already so learned that, with another year's study, they would have no difficulty whatever in answering any questions put to them, so they agreed to the bargain, and signed a document to that effect.

Then the three young men went to live with the learned magister, who was a very strange person indeed; he was little, and was always dressed in grey garments. He had a nose like a hawk's beak, and two small red eyes which were sunk deep in his forehead, while he had thick, grinning lips and a pair of ears that stood away from his head like rams' horns. He was lame, having a club-foot, and it was probably for that reason that he never went outside his house. The three students were very well treated, and an old woman, who was deaf and dumb, had charge of the household.

The magister instructed the students every day, and gave them strange books to read, and it was just as it had been at the university, the poor student read and studied from morn till night, while the other two were soon tired of learning, and, as the town happened to be a large one and offered many attractions and entertainments for young people, they spent most of their time enjoying themselves. When their money was exhausted, they borrowed wherever they could, and their chief aim seemed to be to pass their time as quickly and pleasantly as possible.

Soon the year of study came to an end, and the students began to be troubled about the contract they had signed

in reference to the questions they must answer if they were not to be the magister's slaves all their life. The more they saw of him, the less they liked the idea of being in his power, and they knew quite well that he might put questions to them that they would not be able to answer. Even the poor man's son, who had made the best use of his time, was far from easy in his mind as to whether he could pass the test, and as for the other two, who had spent more time over the gaming-tables than over their books, things looked very black indeed.

On the day before the year came to an end, the poor student went to church, as he did every day, but he was sorely troubled in his mind and heard very little of the sermon and hymns. When he left the church he saw a beautiful old woman standing there who asked alms from him. He put his hand in his pocket, but found only a few shillings: these, however, he gave her. "Take what I have," he said, "I shall not require it any longer." Then she spoke to him, saying that she could see that he had some heavy trouble on his mind; she wished he would confide in her, as she might be able to help him, or at least give him good advice. At first he would not do so and said, "What good would it do, if you knew my trouble." She answered that it might be possible for her to help him; she had already helped many people who had trusted her. Then he confided everything to her, telling her how he and two companions were students with a certain magister; how on the following day they had to answer three

questions, or remain his servants for ever, and how frightened they were as to the result.

"You have great reason to be so," said the woman, "for it is the Evil One himself with whom you are studying. But for your sake I will give you good counsel, which may help the three of you. Late this evening you must take a spade, go to the churchyard with it and dig up a sod of turf, a yard square; this you must take away with you and walk up the hill on the north side of the town, that is the gallows-hill; there you must dig a hole on the south side of the hill, so deep that you can stand upright in it, and of the same width as the sod of turf. Then you must get inside the hole and put the sod over your head. All this you must finish before midnight, and then you will have to wait an hour, when you will learn all that you need to know."

The student did what the woman had bidden him, and before midnight he stood hidden under the sod of turf in his hole on the gallows-hill. Then crows came flying along from the east and from the west, cawing and chattering their loudest, and, as the student, among his studies, had learnt to understand the language of birds and animals, he was able to understand what the crows said. "Will he never come? Will he never come?" they asked one another. At last there came a crow from the south, from the direction of the town; it perched among the rest, and they all went on chattering, talking and cawing. The student listened attentively, and as he understood all they were saying,

he soon learnt what he needed to know. The crow who came last was the magister himself, who had arranged a meeting there with a swarm of other evil spirits, and the student heard him say : " To-morrow the students will be ours ! " " What questions are you going to put to them ? " asked a voice. Then the magister told them the three questions he meant to put to the three wretched students, and what they must answer. But, of course, he thought they would not be able to do it, so that he would certainly get all three into his power. The other spirits laughed, chattered and cawed, and then they all flew away.

When they were quite out of sight, the student left his hiding-place, went home and to bed and slept the whole night, better than he had slept for a long time. Next morning the three breakfasted with their master after having had a secret talk among themselves. The breakfast was much more festive than usual, in honour of the examination and settling up to which the master had looked forward the whole year. A dazzling crimson cloth covered the table, and above that lay a snow-white cloth, while goblets of cut crystal stood on the table, and in the middle was a costly centre-piece of solid silver.

When they had breakfasted the magister turned to the eldest of the young men and said : " After all that you have learnt and studied, it will not be difficult for you to tell me from what material the cloth is made which you see here before you on the table." The student

answered at once: "It is an old horse hide from the knacker's yard," and at the same moment it became evident to all that it was indeed so. The old man closed his little red eyes tightly with rage, and said as calmly as he could: "That may be so, but—" and he turned to the second youth: "Of what are the goblets made out of which you have been drinking?" "They are nothing but old potsherds," was the answer, and the truth of the statement was evident at once. Then the magister could no longer contain himself for anger; he jumped up from his seat, hobbled to the son of the poor man, and seized him so hard by the arm that the lad writhed with pain, and asked in a trembling voice: "What do you think of the centre-piece that is standing in the middle of the table?" "That is nothing but an old horse's skull," was the reply, and they could almost see the skull grinning at them with its hollow sockets and nostrils. The magister cried: "Get out with you, at once! The one who goes out last I shall mark in such a way that he shall never forget me."

The poor student pushed his two friends in front of him, so that they tumbled head over heels through the door, and when he was about to follow them, he pulled the garter from his right leg, changed it into a human being, and rushed out of the room. There was nothing left for the magister to do, but to twist the head of the one who left last, so that his nose was at his back, but as it was only a garter that he had marked thus, nothing could be seen when it lay in front of the door in its

real shape. From that time the student never ventured to put a garter on his right leg again.

Now the three students had gained their freedom, but the sons of the rich man had lived all the time on credit, so that they could not leave the town until they had paid their debts. They were sent to prison, and told that they would be kept there until every penny was paid. The poor man's son was now richer than they were, for he had no debts to pay and was at liberty to go where he liked. He did not want to leave his friends in the lurch, however, and went to visit them in prison, advising them to write to their father, asking him to set them free. They would not do that, for they knew only too well that he was angry with them for their disobedience and that he would not send them a farthing. "You are so clever," they said to their friend, "you must be able to procure the money. You are the man to cheat the magister himself, if need be." The poor student did not like to do this, and yet he wished to help his friends, who had always been so good to him ; so he promised that he would try his best to get them out of prison.

It was not for nothing that he had studied the black art, as he had shown when he changed his garter into a human being, and he knew that it would be quite easy to get the old magister to come and meet him. So he went the same evening to the churchyard, walked three times backward round the church and every time when he passed the door of the church he whistled

They tumbled head over heels through the door

through the keyhole, muttering some mysterious words at the same time. When he had done this for the third time, the old man appeared and said to him : " What can I do for you ? " He spoke quite pleasantly, because he thought it best to treat his former pupil politely, so that he might perhaps get him into his power again. The student told his old master that he needed money and asked him to lend him a bushelful. " You shall have a heaped-up bushelful," said the old magister, " and in three years' time you shall give me back just an exact bushelful. If, however, you cannot pay me then, you will be mine, body and soul." He was quite sure that the other two students would soon spend the money, and that at the end of three years they would be unable to pay back even half of the money, not to speak of the whole.

The student said that those conditions were quite fair, but he asked permission to repay his debt before the three years were ended, should he be able to do so. The old man agreed to that at once, went away, and in a moment was back with a heaped-up bushel full of fine new silver coins. The student took a cloth, placed the bushel measure upon it, and with his stick he went over the measure so that the heaped-up coins fell into his cloth. Then he said to the old man : " Thank you very much for your loan. I now give you back just a bushelful, so we are quits." The old man could make no objection to that ; he had to take back his bushelful of money, and let the student keep what had been heaped up on the top. Of course he was as mad as a

hatter, and darted away, leaving a terrible smell of brimstone behind.

Now the students paid all their debts, and were set free. The poor lad wanted his friends to leave the town and travel, so that they might see the world. The two lads were quite willing to do so, but they found it hard to leave at once; they now had money again, and they began their old manner of living, drinking and feasting until their last shilling was gone. Then they vowed that they would go through the whole world with their wise friend, if he would only procure the necessary money; they were sure, they said, that he could quite easily do that.

"It will be a very dangerous thing to approach the old magister a second time," he said, "and this time I shall not take the responsibility upon myself alone; you must become surety along with me. If I get the money, you will have to obey me in everything." They promised faithfully to do so, and gave him their hands upon it. In the evening he took them to the churchyard and summoned the old magister to appear. "Well, you are back again?" he said; "I owe you thanks for the way you treated me last time; you cheated me then, but I suppose you cannot do without me. What do you want this time?" The student explained to him that he and his friends would like to see the world, but that they had no money; would he be so kind as to give it them. "Of course, I am very good-natured and do not like to refuse you," said the magister, "and as we are now so well acquainted with

one another, I will help you without any reward. I will lend you a purse that will always be full of money, however much you spend, and you may keep it for three years. During that time you may have a good look all over the world, and my only condition is that from to-morrow morning you utter nothing else but what I tell you. One of you must always say, "We three," the second "For money," and the third "That is right." If one of you says anything else during the three years, you will all be mine."

The three students agreed to this, and the wise one received the purse, whereupon they returned to their inn. There they arranged all their plans; the poor student was to take charge of the purse and defray all their travelling expenses, and they vowed solemnly not to utter another word but those the magister had told them. Whatever evil might befall them, they knew that nothing could be worse than getting into the power of that man again.

So they travelled from place to place, from country to country, and saw all the wonderful things of the world; and although they never said anything else but their prescribed words, they got on very well. People thought that they were strange fellows, but as they always paid well, the landlords with whom they stayed were well pleased with them. They had been travelling in this way three years all but three days, when they came to a town they had never visited before. They put up at the best inn, and as they were well dressed and had plenty of luggage, the landlord received them very

politely, and asked after their wants. "We three," said the first. "Oh, I see, the gentlemen wish to occupy the same room," said the landlord; "that can easily be arranged." "For money," said the second. "Oh, of course," said the landlord, "without money we could not live." "That is right," said the third. The landlord thought that everything was satisfactory, and noticed nothing strange about them; they were very short of speech, to be sure, and perhaps somewhat short of sense, but many distinguished visitors were that, and he was quite accustomed to it. The three went into the guest-room but did not utter a word, so when some time had passed the landlord asked them whether they would like any refreshments. "We three," said the first. "For money," said the second. "That is right," said the third. The landlord thought these answers rather strange, but ordered the table to be laid for them, and they sat down and dined. When the landlord asked what kind of wine they liked, he received the same replies. A stranger who was present began a conversation with them, asking whether they had been in the town before, and when he also received the same replies, he kept silence, and agreed with the landlord that they were surely lacking in intelligence.

Now it happened that another traveller was staying at the same inn, and the landlord had noticed that he carried a large sum of money about his person. He spoke to his wife about it, saying that it might be a good opportunity to become rich all at once by killing the traveller, robbing him of his money and accusing

the three strange students of the crime. The landlord's wife was not any better than her wicked husband; in fact she had assisted him before in robbing guests who stayed at their inn, so she was quite ready to assist him this time also. In the middle of the night when all were fast asleep, the landlord and his wife stole into the traveller's bedroom, stabbed him, and took all his money, and then they put the bloodstained knife into the knapsack of one of the students. Early next morning, the landlord rushed to the police and announced that during the night one of his guests had been murdered in bed; he pretended to be greatly distressed, and unable to think who could have done the terrible deed. The police officials went at once to the inn and searched the place until they found the knife. The three students were arrested and brought before the judge, who asked them which of the three had murdered the traveller. "We three," answered the first. "I can well imagine that you all had a hand in it," said the judge; "but why did you do it?" "For money," said the second student. "I dare say you did it for the sake of his money," said the judge. "That is right," said the third student. "God protect us from such a thing being right," replied the judge, "I shall see that you get your right in return." As they had thus confessed to committing the deed, and as the evidence was against them, the sentence was soon delivered—they were to be hanged next day, for there seemed to be no reason to wait.

It required only one day to make up the three years during which the students were forbidden to utter any other words, but they stuck to their bargain, preferring to die rather than fall again into the power of the magister. But the latter did not look upon it in the same light; it was he who had inspired the landlord to act as he had done, thinking thus to get hold of the students again; if they allowed themselves to be hanged innocently, however, he would get nothing for his trouble. Next morning the three unfortunate youths were put on a cart and driven to the place of execution. Crowds of people were present, for the affair had caused great excitement in the town; a clergyman was there also, solemnly to admonish the three prisoners before they suffered the death penalty. He could not get a word from them except the repeated confession: "We three," "For money," and "That is right."—"God help us," exclaimed the clergyman, "if it was right!" He exhorted them to repent of their sins, while the landlord, who was among the crowd, urged loudly that they should not be kept waiting any longer, and that the law should take its course. The clergyman said a final prayer, and then the three young men were led under the gallows and a rope put round the neck of each.

At that very moment, a carriage drawn by four horses came driving along, and a white handkerchief was seen waving from the window. The executioners stopped, thinking it was a messenger from the king with a royal pardon, but when the carriage drew near, a man

dressed in black stepped up to the students and handed them a sheet of paper; it was their written promise. "You may speak now," he said, and then turning to the judge, he continued: "Seize the landlord; it was he and his wife who committed the murder. They have hidden the money in their cellar, and beside it you will also find their blood-stained clothes."

Then the stranger mounted his carriage again, and drove away, no one knew whither. The landlord and his wife were seized at once, the blood-stained garments as well as the stolen property were found, and they had to confess their guilt. They were condemned and hanged the very next day.

The students were now free and could go where they liked, but the purse had gone, as the year was ended, and they had very little money among them. So they sold all their goods and chattels and set out on foot along the high road. Then the same carriage passed them, and the magister put out his head at the window, shouting to them: "I have got two, after all." It was, of course, the landlord and his wife to whom he referred. The students continued their way; they were anxious to return to their friends and relations. They had studied deeply, had travelled, and had suffered great bodily and mental trouble, so they were longing to be at home again. It was, however, no easy matter to get there, for they were then in quite a distant part of the world, and unfortunately they had been unable to supply themselves with money for their journey, as the purse had disappeared so suddenly. Their small stock

of money was soon spent, and they had to beg their way from door to door, but the little they obtained in this way was hardly enough to keep them alive. The sons of the rich man were not long able to bear such hardship and they soon became too ill and wretched to drag themselves any farther.

Their friend had not the heart to leave his companions behind to die in a strange country, and however much he disliked dealing with that dangerous old man with whom he had already got into trouble three times, he could see no other way out of his present difficulty. So late one evening he conjured up the magister and asked him under what conditions he would lend him some money.

"You have made a fool of me so often," was the reply, "that I would rather have nothing more to do with you." In truth, however, he was very anxious indeed to conclude some kind of bargain with the clever student, for he thought that in the end he would succeed in getting him into his power. At last he said, "Ah well, I will help you once more. I will return the purse to you, and you may keep it for seven years. This time you may use your tongue as much as you like, but my condition is that you do not put on a clean shirt during those seven years, nor must you wash yourself, or comb or shave; neither must you cut your hair, your beard, or your nails. If you relent before the time is up, you will be mine after you are dead, but the purse you may keep as long as you live. Do you agree to that? If not, you will not get a single shilling from me."

These were hard conditions indeed, but there was no other way to help his poor friends, so the student signed the contract and received the purse. His two frien s now received the best care and nursing in their illness, so that they were soon restored to their former state of health. Then the student gave each of his friends enough money from his inexhaustible purse to take them home, but not a penny more and bade them good-bye. He could not accompany them this time, he said, as he was compelled to fulfil a vow; more he did not tell them. They were very sad at having to leave him; they thanked him warmly for all he had done for them, then set out on their homeward journey, and no more is heard of them in this story.

The poor man's son, that is, the clever student, was now left alone, with the prospect of passing the next seven years under those hard conditions to which he had agreed. He therefore went to a town where he knew an innkeeper whom he could trust. To him he said that he had made a vow, and desired to live in retirement and seclusion for a long time, and hold no intercourse with human beings. He took rooms at the inn, for which he paid the landlord well, and he lived there year after year under the heavy yoke that the magister had put upon him. The student sent for all the books he could obtain, and read unceasingly, so that he soon acquired the book learning of the whole world. Each week he gave to the landlord a large sum of money to distribute among the poor. The magister was greatly enraged at the use that was being made

of his money, and when six years passed without the student having broken a single condition, the wicked magician began to feel terribly frightened lest the clever student would cheat him once more.

To be sure, the appearance of the student was terrible ; he looked more like an animal than a human being, covered as he was with hair and dirt, and with long claws on his hands and feet. He never showed himself before anyone, having his meals brought into one room while he stayed in the next, and his windows were so arranged that nobody could look into his rooms, although he could look out whenever he liked. He often sat at the window, and to pass the time watched other people going to and fro—rich and poor, old and young—every one of them with his daily work to do, while he, the student, sat there as if buried alive.

When he had led this kind of life for about six years, his attention was drawn to a carriage which frequently passed his windows, but it was not so much the carriage as its occupants that interested him. These were a distinguished-looking lady and her three daughters, all very young and handsome ; but it was the youngest who attracted him most, not only by her great beauty, but also by the sweetness and kindliness of her expression. The landlord told him that they were the wife and daughters of a landed proprietor of the district, and the poor imprisoned student could not help watching at his window to get an occasional glimpse of the pretty young girl.

The father of the three girls was supposed to be a rich

man, and indeed he had once been so, but he had grown very fond of gambling and had gradually lost all his wealth, so that at this time he had more debts than his property was worth. Nobody would lend him a penny, and he would have to leave his estate with a beggar's staff in his hand, unless help came. As he had heard about the strange hermit living at the inn, who was spending large sums of money among the poor, he asked the innkeeper whether he might not see his strange guest. The landlord said he did not think that he would be received, but he agreed to ask, and when the student heard that the father of the three handsome ladies wished to speak with him, he asked the landlord to send him to him at once. When the visitor saw the terrible vision of the uncombed, unwashed man, he was about to rush out of the room again, but the student begged him not to be frightened, as he was a real human being like himself, and neither an animal nor an evil spirit. Then the visitor took courage and stated his request ; he wanted to borrow money from him— not a small sum, but three casks of gold.

The student answered quite calmly that he could have the money, if he would give him one of his daughters to be his wife, to which the other agreed at once, provided one of the girls would have him ; at any rate he would do his best in the matter. The student, however, insisted that the consent must be given without any compulsion whatever, and that the daughters should know beforehand what their wooer was like. Then he sent for a painter who had to

paint him exactly as he looked, and the visitor took the picture home with him.

First he went to his eldest daughter and told her the state of his affairs ; that he possessed less than nothing, and that they would have to give up everything, unless one of his daughters consented to marry the man whose picture he showed her. When she saw the nails that were like the claws of a hawk, and the beard and hair that covered the whole body, she shook her head decidedly, and said : "No, thank you ! I would rather marry our stable boy than such a creature." Then the father went to his second daughter and put the same question to her, but she answered at once that she would rather go begging from door to door than become the wife of such a monster. Then he went with the same request to his youngest daughter. She shuddered when she saw the picture, but she was so anxious to save her father, mother and sisters from misery and starvation, that she said she would marry the man. She sent him a betrothal ring as a pledge that she would keep her promise, and the student, on receiving her ring and her promise, shook his purse until the three casks of gold, which the father required, were ready. Then he shook from the purse money to buy rich presents for his bride, chains, rings, gold and precious jewels ; however, she scarcely looked at them, but locked them in a casket which she never intended to open again.

Meanwhile, the student sent for a joiner and ordered twelve large iron-bound chests to be made, with three heavy

He sent for a painter, who had to paint him

padlocks on each ; these, he said, he required to pack his books in when he left. Then, every day, he shook his purse over the chests, till all twelve were full of money, and when he had finished this task and his other preparations, the seven years had come to an end, and he did not waste a single minute more. He took a bath, had his nails and hair cut, and his beard shaved off, then put on new clothes that he had ordered. A splendid carriage, drawn by four horses, which he had bought, stood ready at the door, with three luggage carts for his chests and his books, and so he drove to the estate of his father-in-law.

There, of course, nobody knew him, but they all thought that he was a very handsome young man, and the two elder daughters were sure that he must have come to woo one of them. When he saw the father, the student told him that he had come to ask for his youngest daughter, whereupon the father said that she was already betrothed. He asked to be allowed at least to see her, and of course, there could be no objection to that. He was conducted to a room where they were all sitting together. Every one rose and shook hands with the visitor, and then he put the betrothal ring, which the youngest daughter had sent him, on her finger and said : "You gave me this ring, and I now ask for it a second time ; will you give it to me of your own free will?" Then his bride understood that this was the man to whom she had plighted her troth, and she handed him back the ring gladly

and joyfully. He remained with them, and the more they knew him, the more everybody liked the clever, good-looking student, and in a month's time the marriage was celebrated with great splendour.

The two elder sisters were wild with envy. When they realized that, through their own fault, they had lost this handsome and rich husband, they did not wish to live any longer, so while the dance was going on in the house, one of them went into the garden and hanged herself, and the other drowned herself in the pond. When the bridegroom stepped out upon the balcony immediately afterward, the magister put his head over the railings and said: "Well, you have got one, but I have got two."

The clever student and his handsome bride lived long and happily and they were a blessing and a joy to all with whom they came in contact.

CENTRAL CIRCULATION
CHILDREN'S ROOM

APR 27 1937